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Vol. LIX.

JOE PHENIX'S LONE HAND.

BY ALBERT W. AIKEN.



"YES, I'M GENERAL JINGO, THE ALL-AROUND SPORT," HE REMARKED, BLOWING OUT RINGS OF SMOKE.

Joe Phenix's Lone Hand;

OR,

WORKING A CURIOUS CLUE.

The Romance of the Millionaire
Brewer's Heritage.

BY ALBERT W. AIKEN.

CHAPTER I.

THE SPORTING BUTCHER GIVES HIMSELF UP.

TEN o'clock on a pleasant evening in May, and jupper Broadway—New York's famous thoroughfare—was, as usual at such an hour, well-filled with a motley crowd of people on business and pleasure intent.

The throng was greatest in the neighborhood of Madison Square, and in the current surging steadily up-town was a tall, well-proportioned and extremely muscular gentleman whose appearance was such as to call for a second look from every one who happened to catch sight of him, for there was that peculiar air of command about him which showed he was a born leader of men.

And yet there were few of the people who noticed the gentleman who could have called him by name, although in the crowd congregated in front of the Fifth avenue Hotel were men who were well-posted in regard to the prominent people of the metropolis.

But this gentleman was one who kept himself in the background as much as possible on account of the business which he pursued.

It was the celebrated detective, Joe Phenix, and it was his calculation that the less the public at large saw, or knew about him, the better he would be able to hunt down the reckless men who braved the power of the law.

But there were a few in the throng who recognized the veteran man-hunter.

One man in particular, an undersized, rather flashily dressed fellow with that peculiar horsey air which denotes a follower of the "turf," gave a start of surprise when his eyes fell on the tall figure of the massive thief-taker.

"Well, may I be jiggered!" he exclaimed. "If here ain't the very man that I wanted to see, and I was a-wondering too where he could be found!"

Then he started after the detective, sidled up alongside of him and said, in an extremely respectful tone:

"If I ain't mistaken this 'ere is Mr. Phenix?"

The detective cast his keen, penetrating eyes upon the speaker—eyes which seemed to have the power to penetrate clear to a man's soul, and replied:

"You are right; that is my name."

"I don't s'pose you know me, sir?" the man remarked in a soft and insinuating way.

"Oh, yes, I am acquainted with you by sight although I do not know your name."

"Is that so now?" exclaimed the little man in surprise.

"Oh, yes, you are a tout by profession, a man who makes a business of playing the spy upon race-horses in training so as to inform the bookmakers how they are getting on, and you usually hang out at the pool-room in Thirty-first street."

"Right as ninnence!" exclaimed the little man in a burst of admiration.

"Well, I'm blessed! if you ain't got me down to a dot, and I didn't believe that you knew me from a side of sole-leather."

"It is a material part of my business to keep posted in regard to men in public life like yourself."

"Oh, yes, I see. Well, my name is MacKuan—Reddy MacKuan the boys all call me."

The detective nodded.

"And you must excuse me for introducing myself to you, but I have got a little bit of business to talk over."

"No apologies are necessary, and I am quite ready to listen to you."

"This is rather a public place," the horseman observed with a glance at the people passing up and down.

"Would you mind coming over to the Park where we will have a chance to chin a bit without danger of anybody catching on to what we say?"

"Oh, no, I have no objection."

"I'm awfully obliged."

"Not at all."

The two crossed to the leafy shades of Madison Square, and the horseman directed the detective's attention to a vacant bench.

"If you don't mind we might sit down there for our talk," he said.

"I am agreeable."

The two seated themselves on the bench.

"I don't know as you know much about me, Mr. Phenix," the man remarked. "But though I am a tout and play in with the pool-rooms yet I have the reputation of being a pretty square sort of a fellow—one of the kind of men, you understand, who always tries to give a run for the money."

"Yes, I have always heard you well spoken of by your associates."

"Now, Mr. Phenix, I am going to give a pal away; he is a dead game cove, and I trust you will not take any advantage of what I am going to tell you," the other said in an earnest way.

"Well, I am not in the habit of doing that sort of thing," Joe Phenix replied, in his quiet but decided way.

"I know that, Mr. Phenix," the man hastened to say. "I know what your reputation is and that is why I speak to you about this matter."

"Well, sir, the butcher wants to give himself up."

"The butcher does, eh?" the detective observed in a reflective way.

"Yes, sir, Tommy Kline, who used to be on Sixth avenue, the sporting butcher as all we horsemen always called him, and I tell you, Mr. Phenix, Tommy was a dead game sport if ever there was one!"

"Well, I don't know much about the butcher," the man-hunter remarked.

"Tommy is a good, square fellow, and never had any trouble until he ran up against this Long Larry," the tout asserted.

"I remember the particulars. The butcher and Larry had trouble in a saloon and the butcher laid Larry out."

"And it was in self-defense, Mr. Phenix!" the horseman protested, earnestly.

"If ever there was a blow struck in self-defense, it was that one."

"Maybe you know Long Larry, and understand what kind of a man he was."

"Oh, yes, a pretty bad egg, and no mistake! While he pretended to be a boxer and a sporting man, yet, in reality, he was a thief and a desperado, who was willing to turn his hand to almost any rascality which seemed to have a dollar in it, from house-breaking or highway robbery to going through a drunken man in a doorway."

"That is the fellow to a dot!" the other declared.

"Now, in this case he was drunk and ugly; he had the butcher in a corner of a saloon, so that Tommy couldn't have run even if he had wanted to do so; then the butcher, seeing that he was in for trouble, jest sailed into Harry, and, as he was a big, powerful fellow, he laid him out."

"Yes, I recollect, and the tough was carried off to the hospital for repairs."

"Exactly! for the butcher hammered him for all he was worth!" the tout exclaimed.

"Then the next day word was brought to Tommy that Larry was so badly hurt that he was likely to croak, and Tommy thought it wise to light out, for Larry was running with a bad gang, and they had all sworn to come into court for to do their best to hang the butcher if Larry made a die of it."

"I am well acquainted with Larry's crowd, and a bigger set of rascals can't be found in the city!" Joe Phenix asserted.

"Of course that is so; there isn't any mistake about it, and though I suppose it would have been better for Tommy to have stayed right here in New York and faced the music, yet he got rattled and so bolted."

"Yes, it would have been wiser if he had remained."

"Well, men will do foolish things once in a while, you know," the other remarked, with the air of a philosopher.

The veteran detective nodded assent.

"Tommy went out West to the mining region, and has been knocking about out

there ever since, but he happened to get hold of a New York paper and read in it that Larry had passed in his checks, then he got the idea that the detectives were after him, so he turned himself into a regular wandering Jew, but he soon got so sick of it that he made up his mind to come back to the city and give himself up."

"He knew that I was a man who could be trusted and so he came to me. All he is afraid of now is that he will not get a show for his money, and he said to me, 'Go, hunt up Joe Phenix and tell him I want to give myself up. Tell him a straight tip as to how I came to lay Larry out, ask him to get me a good lawyer and do the best he can for me.'"

"I feel honored by the confidence which the man reposes in me," the man-hunter remarked.

"Ah, Mr. Phenix, you have got the reputation of doing the square thing by everybody!" the horseman declared.

"Well, I try to live up to the golden rule, 'Do unto others as you would be done by,' as nearly as I can."

"S'pose you come along and see the butcher?" the tout suggested. "He is over in my room on Sixth avenue."

The detective assented, and ten minutes later the horseman ushered Joe Phenix into his apartment, a plainly furnished lodging room.

The butcher, a good-looking man of thirty-five, but whose countenance showed traces of mental anxiety, greeted the man-hunter warmly when the tout introduced him.

"I can't stand this sort of life any longer!" the fugitive declared. "I have been dodging from one town to another with the thought that every other man I meet is a detective after me, so I have come back to face my trial."

"I give myself up, Mr. Phenix. As Heaven is my judge I didn't mean to kill the man, and I have confidence that you will see that I have a fair show."

"Don't worry, Mr. Kline. Long Larry is not dead. The report of his death was a mistake, and he is now in the Charlestown, Massachusetts, prison under a life sentence for murder."

CHAPTER II.

A MYSTERIOUS MESSAGE.

THE men were completely astounded, and they gazed open-mouthed at the detective.

A quiet smile came over Joe Phenix's face.

"This is rather unexpected, I take it," he remarked.

"Well, you can bet your life it is!" the sporting butcher continued.

"I reckon, Tommy, that this is the best piece of news that you have heard in many a long day!" the horseman declared.

"The reporter who put the item in the newspaper got some other Larry mixed up with the Larry we knew," the man hunter explained.

"The police authorities were aware of the mistake, but did not care to contradict the report, for after the man went to the hospital it came to the knowledge of the superintendent that Larry was one of a gang who broke into a house in Fordham, and almost killed the owner, and it was the chief's design to arrest the man as soon as he was able to leave the hospital, but in some mysterious way Larry got wind of what the police intended, so when he began to get well he played 'possum so skillfully as to deceive the doctors, and skipped out one night, getting off before the detectives could catch him."

"The man is as tough as they make 'em," the butcher declared.

"Oh, yes, I doubt if a worse scoundrel can be scared up in the city!" MacKuan assented.

"Yes, he is both a cunning and a desperate rascal, but his career is just the same as the rest of law-breakers, one month at liberty and six months in jail," Joe Phenix remarked.

"That's correct! As sure as you are born!" the horseman exclaimed.

"And why any man possessed of an average amount of good sense should deliberately choose to lead the life of a criminal when it is certain that the greater part of his days will be passed within a prison's walls is a mystery," the detective observed.

"Long Larry fled from this State to escape

the pursuit of the police, went to Boston, engaged in a house-breaking expedition, was surprised by the officers, and in the fight that followed one of the police was so badly hurt that he afterward died of his wounds; but a skilful lawyer saved Larry's neck, and he got a life sentence instead of being hung.

"Well, Mr. Phenix, I can tell you that I breathe a heap sight easier!" the butcher declared.

"Yes, I imagined that your mind would be relieved," Joe Phenix observed, with a smile.

"Of course, I need not have taken the trouble to come and tell you this, for I could have sent word by your friend here, but as you had confidence enough in my honor to trust yourself in my hands, I couldn't resist the temptation to tell you the good news myself."

"Mr. Phenix, you are a trump, and no mistake!" the sporting butcher cried, enthusiastically.

"And if I can ever do you a service in any way, don't be afraid to call upon me, for I will not be at all backward in coming forward!"

"That is my platform, too, Mr. Phenix!" the racing man asserted.

"The time may come when a mouse of a man like myself can do a lion-like fellow like you a service, and you can bet your sweet life, that I won't be back in the ruck, but right under the wire when the bell sounds!"

The veteran detective thanked the pair for their good wishes, shook hands with them, then took his departure.

There was a pleasant smile on the face of the man-hunter as he proceeded down the avenue.

"I do not regret that I took the trouble to come," he soliloquized, as he proceeded. "The sight of his face when I made known the good tidings to him amply paid me for the walk, and then, somehow, I had a sort of feeling that I ought to come, and, as a rule, I seldom refuse to pay attention to a presentiment of that kind."

Joe Phenix halted on the corner of a cross street as he came to the end of the sentence, to allow a wagon to pass.

It was one of the baggage transfer wagons so common in the streets of the metropolis.

The driver was on his way to the stables, and so in a hurry to get home, and the way in which he allowed his horse to slew the wagon around the corner was a caution.

As the wagon rattled on its way in front of the detective, a small piece of board dropped from the open tail-board of the vehicle and fell at Joe Phenix's feet.

There was an electric light on the corner so the street was almost as light as though it was day, therefore the detective was able to perceive that the piece of board was a weather-worn shingle, which looked as though it had been blown from a roof, and there was some writing upon it.

The man-hunter picked up the board and examined the writing.

It was clearly legible, written in pencil, and evidently by a female hand.

By the aid of the electric lamp the detective read the writing aloud, and it ran as follows:

"Help, help! I am an orphan girl without a protector or friends, and I am a prisoner in a lonely old house, situated I know not where. Two men guard me, and they act so strangely at times that I do not know what to make of them and I am really afraid of my life. I am allowed to walk in the garden which is a strange old-fashioned one, almost overgrown with weeds. There is no danger of my escaping, for the garden is surrounded by a high brick wall, and on the top of the wall is a fearful array of broken glass, fixed in cement, so that if any one should attempt to climb over the wall they would be horribly cut by the broken glass. It is but seldom that I hear anybody go by in the street without, although once in a while a wagon passes. I write this on a shingle which I have found in the garden, and the next time I hear a wagon go by I am going to throw it over the wall in hopes to attract attention. I dare not attempt to give an alarm for I fear it would infuriate my jailers so that it would cost me my life. I cannot tell where I am, for I was brought to the place at night, but it is near a railroad and a depot, for I distinctly hear the trains as they arrive and depart. I think too it is near a river also, for I often hear whistles which sound as though they came from steamboats. I beg of the one who finds this to come as soon as possible and release me from my dreadful position.

"CONSTANCE JACOBS."

In spite of the fact that the communication was written on a rough board, and with a

lead-pencil, it was evident the author was a pretty writer.

When the detective came to the end of the communication he gazed reflectively around him for a moment.

"Now see how wise I was to pay attention to the presentiment which told me that I ought to bear the good news to the sporting butcher in person," he mused.

"Had I not done so this mysterious communication would not have come in my way, and so I would not have been able to go to the rescue of this girl."

"It is a very strange circumstance," and he reflected over the matter for a few moments.

"From the description which the writer gives of the locality it is not possible to fix upon the exact location of the house, for the description fits both the shore of the Sound and the bank of the Hudson River."

"She evidently heard the wagon passing, threw the shingle over the wall, and was lucky enough to throw it into the wagon, but evidently without attracting the attention of the driver, so that she was not so fortunate as she might have been."

"It is probably better though as it is," the man-hunter remarked after a pause.

"For if the driver had got it, then it would not have come into my possession, and he might have troubled himself to look into the matter, and then he might not, for it takes all sorts of men to make a world."

"I, most assuredly, will make it my business to examine into the affair!" the detective declared.

"Of course, there is a possibility that it may be a hoax, but I will go ahead on the theory that it is not."

"Let me see! the first point is to get at the driver and find out from him where he has been to-day, and in that way I may be able to get at the location of the house."

"I got a good look at the man, so I will be able to know him again."

"The wagon was empty, and that indicates that it was either just going to the stables or had recently come from there, so the first thing for me to do is to visit the stables."

An empty cab happened to come along at that moment and the detective hailed the driver.

The man was in search of a "fare," so Joe Phenix engaged him to drive to the stables of the transfer company.

The detective got there just in time to intercept the driver as he was leaving for home.

"I want to get some information from you," Joe Phenix said.

"Hey?" responded the fellow in a sulky way, evidently a cross-grained sort of a chap.

"I am a detective officer," and Joe Phenix opened his coat so as to display his badge.

A look of alarm came over the man's face.

"What is up?" he inquired, anxiously.

"Nothing to concern you particularly. Where was your route to-night?"

"Out beyond King's Bridge."

"Do you know anything about a piece of wood being thrown into your wagon?"

The driver looked surprised.

"Yes, I believe somebody did chuck something at me, but I didn't pay any attention to it, for boys are allers up to larks of that kind."

"Do you know just where you were when the wood was thrown?"

The driver shook his head.

"Haven't any idea?"

"Not a bit, excepting that it was after I had got rid of all my trunks and so it must have been as I was on my way home."

"Can you give me the route you went?"

"Yes, by looking at the book."

The two repaired to the office and the detective took down the directions.

"All right; much obliged!" the man-hunter remarked.

"Say, what in blazes are you up to?" the driver asked in wonder.

"Oh, no, I can't give it away! It will not do to tell tales out of school," Joe Phenix responded as he departed.

CHAPTER III.

SEARCHING IT OUT.

As Joe Phenix came out of the stables he caught sight of a bright full moon coming

up over the housetops, and the appearance of Madam Luna in all her glory suggested an idea to him.

It was always the detective's habit to take time by the forelock and not to allow the grass to grow under his feet when he had work on hand.

"Why not commence my investigations to-night?" he murmured.

"There is a full moon which will render all objects about as visible as by day. Here is a cab all ready for me, and I have nothing to do to-night, while if I wait until to-morrow some business may turn up to interfere with my going on with this affair."

"Decidedly then I ought to see what I can do to-night."

Having come to this conclusion the detective had a talk with the cabman in regard to his knowledge of the country above King's Bridge.

To the reader who is not acquainted with the topography of the upper part of the great metropolis, the rural district, be it explained that King's Bridge is the first bridge on the Harlem River after the Central railway crossing at the junction of the Harlem with the Hudson River.

The Harlem River, so-called, be it understood, is not a river at all, only a narrow body of water running from the Hudson to the East River, to the north of New York, and the East River again is not a true river, but a tide-way connecting Long Island Sound and New York Bay.

Over King's Bridge goes the continuation of the metropolis's great street, mighty Broadway, and Broadway the country road is still called many miles to the northward of New York City.

In the olden times Broadway was known as the King's Highway, hence the bridge's name.

The driver was a little hazy in regard to the locality.

"Lor' bless you, sir!" he exclaimed. "I don't believe there is a driver in New York who knows the city any better than I do, but when it comes to those country roads out beyond the Harlem I reckon I ain't in it."

Joe Phenix reflected over the matter for a moment.

According to the driver's statement the shingle had been throw into the wagon after he had delivered his baggage, and was on the way to the city again, so in order to find the locality where the house, with the brick garden wall, was situated, all that was really necessary to do was to go to the last place where the transfer wagon had stopped and then take the nearest road to King's Bridge.

The detective had tried to get from the driver a detailed account of the route which he had taken, but the man had not been able to give it, being a stranger to the locality, but he said he only turned two or three times, and gave it as his opinion that there would not be much trouble for any one to come the same way which he had taken.

"Well, we will drive to King's Bridge and after we cross it we can inquire our way," the detective remarked.

"Lemme see, you go straight up Broadway to get to the bridge, I believe?" the driver questioned. "I never was up that far, you see."

"Yes, that is correct."

The man-hunter entered the cab, the driver touched his whip to the horse and away they went.

The cabman's horse was a good beast, and tolerably fresh, so the vehicle went on at a good rate of speed.

It was a long drive though from the center of the city to the upper part of the Harlem River, and considerable time was taken up in the passage.

Finally though the cab came to King's Bridge, crossed it, and soon after the driver spied a policeman, whereupon he immediately notified his passenger.

Joe Phenix inquired of the blue-coat and as the officer happened to be not only an unusually intelligent man, but one well posted in regard to the neighborhood, he had no difficulty in obtaining the information which he sought.

But he found the address which the driver had given him was a good half-mile from

the bridge, and there were three different roads by means of which it could be reached, according to the policeman, and all of them were about equally direct.

Then the detective gave a description of the house, with the brick wall, surmounted by the broken glass, which he desired to find.

A wall arranged in this peculiar way to keep out interlopers is not a common sight, and Joe Phenix was in hopes that the officer might be able to direct him to the house.

"Well, I cannot recall to mind any house with a wall of that kind on my beat," the metropolitan observed in a reflective way.

"No, sir, I am quite certain that there isn't anything of the kind in this neighborhood."

"My beat takes in a pretty good stretch of country," he continued. "And I would be certain to know if there was such a place anywhere around."

"I think you will have to try the north or east," the officer said in conclusion.

While the policeman had been speaking, Joe Phenix had been busy in thought.

It was evident that the expressman had made a mistake in thinking that the shingle had been thrown into the wagon after he had delivered his last piece of baggage, if the statement of the officer was correct, and the detective was much more inclined to put faith in the policeman than in the driver.

So the man-hunter referred to his memorandum, and asked the officer in reference to the last address but one which he had taken from the expressman's book.

"Well, that is about a mile further on, a good half a mile from the other place you spoke of," the policeman replied. "And I really don't know much about that neighborhood. It is not on my beat, you see. It is not very thickly settled up in that direction either, and I should not be surprised if the house you want to find is somewhere in that neighborhood." Then he told the cabman how he must drive to reach the spot.

Joe Phenix thanked the officer for his directions, and asked the cabman if he thought he could find the place all right.

The driver responded that he guessed he could, and on again they went.

The detective consulted his watch after the cab started.

"In six or eight minutes we ought to cover the distance," he soliloquized. "But I fear that it is going to be more trouble to find the house than I anticipated."

Joe Phenix kept a good watch upon the surroundings as the cab went on.

Six minutes elapsed, and during that time the vehicle had passed out of the thickly populated region to where the houses were few and far between.

"Aha! this looks like promising ground!" the man-hunter exclaimed.

Then there was a sudden jar—a jolt, and down went one side of the cab, almost pitching Joe Phenix out headlong into the road.

The axle had broken.

The driver had been flung from his seat by the sudden jar, but, luckily, escaped injury.

Joe Phenix got out as soon as he could and found the cabman rising to his feet with a very woe-begone face.

"Are you hurt?" the detective questioned.

"No; I reckon I ain't any the worse for the spill," the cabman replied, as he gave himself a vigorous shake. "But you kin bet the cab is though."

"The axle has given way."

"Yes, it is that infernal rut, but such things will happen on these country roads."

"It is unlucky, but it is one of those accidents which cannot be foreseen."

Then Joe Phenix looked around and called the driver's attention to some bright lights ahead.

"From the display I should imagine that to be a saloon," he said. "And if it is, you will be able to procure assistance there."

"By getting a stout stick and lashing it to the axle you can manage to get to your stable all right."

"I will go ahead on foot, since I am so near my destination," he continued.

Then the detective took out his pocket-book and handed the driver a ten-dollar bill.

"There, I think that will cover the damage," he remarked.

"Thank you, sir, much obliged!" the cabman exclaimed, his face lighting up.

"You are a perfect gentleman, sir!" he continued, gratefully. "Anybody can see that with half an eye."

"I am a poor man with a family, and this accident would come hard on me if you had been inclined to Jew a bit, but this tinner will put me on my legs again all right!"

"Oh, well, I am able to stand it and you are not, so it is only fair that I should do what I can to help you out," the man-hunter remarked.

"Good-night and good-luck to you!"

"Good-night and grand luck to you, sir!" the cabman exclaimed.

"And you will get it too, for a square man allers comes out ahead!"

"Much obliged for your good wishes!" Joe Phenix responded with a smile.

And then, leaving the driver to repair damages as best he could, the detective set out.

As he had anticipated the bright lights were in a saloon window, and Joe Phenix stopped to inquire in regard to the old house, with the brick garden wall.

No information could he procure though, for the saloon man was a dull, stupid German, and a stranger too in the neighborhood.

"This is going to be a more difficult matter than I bargained for when I set out," the detective mused as he again went on his way.

"I must keep my eyes open for a policeman," he continued. "If I could strike another officer as intelligent as that last fellow I would be certain to get the information that I want, for I must be in the immediate neighborhood of the house now."

And acting on this idea Joe Phenix kept a good lookout as he proceeded, expecting to find the object of his search at any moment.

CHAPTER IV.

A WARM RECEPTION.

THE road was a lonely one, the houses being far apart, and as the detective went on he came to a bend in the thoroughfare; the road at this point was so thickly shaded by tall trees with luxuriant foliage that the rays of the moon were almost totally obscured.

"Well, this is a gloomy spot," Joe Phenix murmured as he entered into the darkness.

"If there were any footpads in this neighborhood they couldn't find a better place to lie in wait for a victim," the detective continued.

Hardly had he given utterance to the sentence when two dark forms sprung from the gloom upon him.

The foremost one aimed a terrible blow with a short club at the detective's head.

The darkness was so intense that it was almost impossible for the man-hunter to see what the man was doing, but as he anticipated some such movement as this he was prepared for it.

The moment the men made their rush he threw up his left arm to guard his head—the assailants had been concealed behind a huge tree-trunk on his left hand—and at the same time dropped upon his knees.

This unexpected maneuver completely defeated the attempt to take the detective by surprise.

The powerful blow, by means of which the ruffian expected to fell the victim senseless to the earth, came down upon Joe Phenix's arm, and as the man-hunter's sudden yielding to the stroke robbed it of the greater part of its force it did not do any material damage.

And then the three went to the ground all in a heap, the footpads in their impetuous movement precipitating themselves upon the detective.

In a game of this kind a resolute and powerful man of the Joe Phenix stamp was quite at home.

It was so dark that the fight had to be conducted at random, for it was not possible in the struggle for the men to clearly see what they were about.

One great advantage that the detective possessed though was that he knew both of the men to be his foes, and if he hit either of them he was sure the blow was not wasted, while the ruffians, not being able on account of the darkness to see what they were doing, were just as likely to damage each other in

their efforts to disable the stranger as to hit him.

And so it happened that the man with the club gave his comrade a terrible whack on the head, while at the same moment Joe Phenix's iron-like fist hit him a lick under the ear.

The two blows coming together laid out the man.

With a hollow groan he tumbled over backward.

In sporting parlance he was "knocked out."

Then the other realized that he had hit the wrong man, for the muscular detective got him by the throat and choked him with right good will.

The fellow gasped and gurgled, then relinquished his grasp on Joe Phenix, and, with a sudden violent effort, managed to wriggle out of the clutch of the detective.

Joe Phenix was hot after him, but the darkness favored the man.

The detective in his attempt to pursue him tripped over a tree-root, and this gave the ruffian an opportunity to escape, which he improved to the best of his ability.

"I've got one anyway!" the man-hunter cried. "And I will fix him so he will not get away while I pursue the other!"

Drawing a pair of handcuffs from his pocket he snapped them upon the wrists of the senseless man, then with his handkerchief he bound the ankles of the ruffian.

"Now then, I reckon you will stay here until I come after you!" Joe Phenix declared.

It had only taken the veteran detective a few moments to render his prisoner helpless, and the footsteps of the fleeing man were still ringing on the air when Joe Phenix rose to his feet and started in pursuit.

"I hav'n't done much running for some years now," the detective muttered as he followed on the track, "but as I used to be pretty good at this sort of thing I ought to be able to run this fellow down, unless he is a champion racer, and from what I was able to make out of him in the darkness he is a rather short, thick-set fellow, more on the bull-dog than the greyhound build, and so not likely to be speedy of foot."

"Then, too, the choking that I gave him will not be apt to improve his running powers!"

The ruffian had managed to gain such a start though that he was just turning a corner a thousand yards or so down the road when Joe Phenix came out from the shade of the trees into the moonlight.

The detective was just in time to catch a glimpse of the man as he vanished around the corner, but the fellow was so far off that Joe Phenix could not distinguish just exactly what he was like.

"If the nature of the country favors him he will be apt to give me the slip, for he has got a big start!" the veteran detective mused as he raced onward at the top of his speed.

Joe Phenix endeavored to run as lightly as possible so as not to give the man warning that he was pursued.

He fancied though that the fellow was already aware of the fact, for he had an idea the man had cast a hasty glance over his shoulder as he turned the corner.

"I will do my best to catch him though!" the detective muttered as he raced onward.

It did not take him many seconds to cover the distance which intervened between the gloomy spot, where the footpads had lain in ambush, and the place where the man had disappeared.

But when the detective turned the corner he was annoyed to discover that the fellow was not in sight.

"It was a broad stretch of open country, too, which lay before the man-hunter's eyes."

On one side there wasn't anything but open fields, with here and there a clump of bushes by the roadside.

On the other there were open fields also, but a thousand yards or so down the road stood a lonely mansion, inclosed by a high wooden fence.

The house was a massive building, almost hidden by giant pine trees, which gave it a peculiar solemn look, and from the fact that the unusually high fence surrounded the grounds, it would seem as if it was some public building rather than a private one.

There wasn't another house within half a mile, and as the country was so open, and the rays of the moon so bright as to give the man-hunter fully as good a view as though it had been day, the disappearance of the fugitive seemed strange.

Joe Phenix halted in order to listen, but all was still; no sound of footsteps came to his ears.

"Well, this is certainly very strange!" he exclaimed as he proceeded down the road.

He had moderated his pace to a walk, for there wasn't any use of running now.

The man would never have been able to more than reach that house by this time!" the detective exclaimed. "So it is evident that he has either managed to get inside the grounds attached to that mansion, through the gate I see there, or else he is hiding in one of those clumps of bushes, and I don't think that it is likely that he would try a game of that kind, unless he has a gun and calculates to plug me as I come up.

"If that is his game, though, he will find that it is one that two can play at," the man-hunter continued as he slipped his revolver out of his pocket, and carefully examined the cylinder so as to be certain that it was in good working order.

It was about a hundred yards to the first clump of bushes, and as it was a good-sized one, in the midst of which a man could find concealment by extending himself at full length, Joe Phenix was on his guard, using decided caution in approaching the bushes as soon as he got within a hundred feet of clump, for he was well aware that it takes an extra good revolver-shot to hit a moving target like a man at much over fifty feet.

And when he arrived at that distance the detective leveled his revolver and, in a stern voice, commanded:

"Come out!"

The command was promptly obeyed too, although, to the surprise of the man hunter, it was not the burly ruffian who appeared, but from the covert of the bushes came a good representative of the street Arabs of New York, an undersized boy of twelve or fifteen, a skinny, weasel-like lad with a freckled face and red hair.

He had eyes as bright and piercing as those of a rat, and a peculiar sharp look.

A gamin of the great metropolis, brought up in the street, his school the gutter, his wits sharpened by the life he was compelled to lead, such a lad knows more of the busy world at ten than the average boy does at twenty.

"All right, boss!" the boy cried in shrill tones as he came out into the moonlight.

"I'm yer mutton—don't shoot!"

"Hello! who on earth are you?" the detective inquired in surprise.

"Who am I? Why I am jest Swipsey—Green-eyed Swipsey the gang calls me, but they ain't got no right to do it, 'cos my eyes are gray and they ain't green!"

"But you know how it is yourself, boss," the boy continued in a complaining tone. "When a cove once gits a nick-name it is the hardest thing in the world for him to get clear of it.

"When I was only a little kid, an' furst came on the street to sell me papers, some big stuff t'ought it was smart to shoot off his mouth an' hit me wid der name of Green-eyed Swipsey, an' de gang took it up, an' dat is how I come to be call dat, but it is all dead wrong, you bet your sweet life!"

"Where is the man who ran down the road! Did you see him?" Joe Phenix demanded.

"You bet yer boots I did!" the boy exclaimed. "Say, w'ot will it be worth to me to give der snap away?" the boy asked in a business-like tone.

CHAPTER V.

FOLLOWING UP THE CLUE.

"Oh! you are on the make!" Joe Phenix exclaimed.

"Ah, come off! w'ot am I here for, see?" the boy replied with a knowing wink.

"You saw the man, of course?"

"I reckon I ain't gone blind yet awhile!" Swipsey declared.

"An' how the bloke did hoof it down de road!"

"I was jest takin' a snooze in me summer bedroom when dat bloke come down der road like he was a 'selling plater' from Guttenberg!"

"I jest laid low and kept my mouth shut 'cos I hadn't lost any men, but I kept up a fearful lot of thinking as to why the big stuff was tryin' for to beat der record, but when you came piling 'round der corner I reckoned dat you was in it for keeps!"

"This fellow, with a pal, tried to rob me in the other road, but I was too quick for them," the detective explained.

"You don't mean it!" the boy said in a burst of admiration.

And then with a critical eye he surveyed the stalwart proportions of the man-hunter.

"You are built for it, sure as you're born!" he continued.

"I reckon from your looks dat it would take a fighter 'bout de size of Sullivan for to git away with you."

"I laid these fellows out without any trouble," Joe Phenix replied. "But this man contrived to get away from me. I suppose he has gone into the gate of that house over there, for I don't see where else he could go, and if you care to give the thing away I will put up a dollar for your trouble."

"Ah, come off! you don't mean it!" the boy cried, incredulously.

"Honest Injun!" the detective replied. "I want satisfaction out of that fellow, for he tried to lay my head open with a club, and that is why I am so anxious to get at him."

"Here is the dollar, so you can see that I mean what I say!"

And the detective, taking a silver dollar from his pocket, tossed it to the boy.

And the first thing which that remarkable youth did, as soon as he caught the coin, was to bite it.

"Jumping Jingo! if it ain't the real thing, an' no mistake!" he cried.

"You didn't suppose that I was going to give you a piece of bad money?"

"Well, boss, I don't know," and the boy shook his head in a doubtful way.

"Things are so shaky nowadays dat a cove don't know who he kin trust, but you are all right—you are solid, an' don't you forgit it!"

"I am glad of that," Joe Phenix remarked, amused by the boy, who, he saw, was a decided character.

"I wish I was solid, too, but I ain't," and Swipsey shook his head in a melancholy way.

"How is that?"

"Dere is a gang down 'round de City Hall dat is goin' to 'do' me, 'cos dey say I give a bloke away dat took a leather—dat is a pocketbook, you know—from a cove on de bridge, an', so help me Bob, I didn't know nuffin' 'bout it, but jest 'cos I sold a paper to de fly-cop afore he pinched de man, de gang got it into dere deads dat I was de bloke w'ot did de squealin'."

"Well, you do the fair thing by me and I will see that the gang will not trouble you any more," the detective observed.

The boy looked at the speaker in an incredulous way.

"You don't mean it, boss?"

"Oh, yes I do!"

"An' kin you fix it?"

"I can, and I will. My name is Phenix, and I am a detective officer."

"Jumping Jingo! you don't say so!" cried the lad, in wonder.

"Yes, it is the truth."

"Why, I have heered of you many a time, an' I read 'bout you in the newspapers, too!"

"You seem to be a sharp lad, and it is often in my power to put a job in the way of just such a boy as you are."

"Why, Mr. Phenix, I would be glad to do anything I could for you!" the boy exclaimed.

"At present I am after this man. He went in through the gate yonder."

"You bet, and he went in a hurry too, and I t'ought de bloke had gone crazy until you came 'round de corner like a steam engine!"

"I will have him out of there in short order!" the detective exclaimed as he cast a glance across the way.

"That fence is too high for a man to climb, unless he was a trained acrobat," he continued, measuring the wooden barrier with his

eye. "And as the man went in, the chances are about a thousand to one that he is there, all right!"

"It was strange that he should have the luck to find the gate open, for it looks like an institution of some kind, and such concerns are usually careful to have their gates locked somewhere around ten or eleven o'clock."

"Well, boss, I have been camping down in dis neighborhood for three nights now, 'cos it was out of the way of der perlice, and I never see'd anybody come in or go out," the boy remarked.

"The grounds are extensive ones," Joe Phenix observed in a thoughtful way. "And I may have trouble in catching him, for although there isn't any doubt that he is hiding away in there somewhere, yet while I am searching the grounds in order to discover his hiding-place he may be able to sneak out at the gate."

"You bet; an' dat is jest de game dat dis 'ere cove will try!" the boy declared with a wise shake of the head.

"I must take measures to put a stop to his playing a trick of that kind," the detective remarked.

"Do you know how to handle a revolver?" he asked.

"You kin bet your sweet life dat I do!" the boy replied immediately.

"Why, it was only last fourth of July dat I blowed in two honest dollars for a reg'lar Jim Dandy of a gun, an' I had more fun wid it dan you could shake a stick at in a week, an' I would have had it now if I hadn't had the bad luck for to lose all me money playing craps with Nigger Jim—you know w'at dat game of craps is, boss, dat these southern nigs play?"

Joe Phenix nodded in the affirmative.

"Nigger Jim is a holy terror at dat game an' he cleaned me out in no time, den I had to have de cash fer to git me papers in de morning so de gun had to go."

"Yes, I understand," the detective observed.

"Now, my lad, if you feel inclined to help me in this matter I will pay you well for your trouble."

"Oh, that is all right, boss, I will be glad to take a hand in de fuss!"

Joe Phenix drew a small revolver from an inside breast pocket of his coat and gave it to the newsboy.

"It is a double-action weapon—a self-cocker, do you understand what that means?" the detective asked.

"Oh, yes! one of the bootblack kids down at the Brooklyn Bridge found a ten-dollar note the odder day, an' would you believe it? dat Dago was jest chump enough for to go an' blow in eight solid 'cases' for a self-cocker, an' 'fore he had it two days he was idjit enuff for to pull it on anodder kid w'ot sassed him, den a fly cop got onto him and nipped the gun."

"A rather unlucky investment," the detective observed.

"You bet! but these Dagos ain't got no sense!" Swipsey declared.

"Now, then, you take this revolver and keep watch at the gate; and if the fellow attempts to escape while I am searching the grounds, stop him, and sound an alarm on this," and as he spoke the detective produced a whistle which he handed to the newsboy.

"And if the bloke puts on any air an' attempts for to run over me I am to plug him, I s'pose, even if I lay him out for keeps?"

"Yes, under the circumstances I am justified in ordering you to stop the man at all hazards," Joe Phenix replied. "He is a highway robber, and there is no doubt that he would not hesitate to kill any man whom he selected for a victim if he could not get at his valuables in any other way."

"All you have got to do is to give me orders to plug him if he ain't willing for to be nabbed, an' you kin bet your bottom dollar dat I will soak him for all he is worth!" Swipsey declared, in a way which plainly indicated that he would be as good as his word.

"Give him fair warning to halt the moment he approaches the gate, at the same time blowing the whistle, and then if he does not obey the command fire at him!"

"You can bet your boots I will!" the boy replied.

Joe Phenix advanced to the gate, the newsboy following closely at his heels.

The gate was a massive iron one, and when the detective attempted to open it he found that he was not able to do so.

"This is rather strange," Joe Phenix remarked, as he made a careful examination of the lock which secured the gate.

"It is not a spring lock, and yet the bolt is home in its place."

"Dere ain't no mistake 'bout his going in t'rough the gate 'dough, for I see'd him with my own two looking eyes!" Swipse declared.

"The gate must have been unlocked then or else he could not have got in," the detective observed.

"Oh, yes, it must have been, an' it was shut, too, 'cos when I come by it I was a-thinkin' dat if de gate was open I could go in an' git a bully chance for a snooze under the trees."

"Did you hear the gate make any noise after the fellow passed in?"

"Not a sound!"

"That is rather odd for iron gates of this kind usually creak in a dismal way on their hinges when they are moved, particularly if the operation is performed in a hurry."

"I didn't hear a mite of noise, boss!" the boy declared.

"The key must have been in the lock, and the fellow took advantage of the fact to fasten the gate after he passed through," Joe Phenix said.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MASTER OF THE MANSION.

THE veteran detective was decidedly puzzled by the fact that the gate was locked, for it did not seem probable to him that any one would be careless enough to leave the key in the lock; still, servants sometimes do just such stupid things.

As it happened there was a bell-knob at one side of the gate and when Joe Phenix noticed it he remarked:

"Here is a bell, evidently, and I suppose I shall have to rouse the people in the house in order to be able to search the grounds."

"That is the ticket, boss!" Swipse exclaimed, very much delighted at being able to witness the proceedings.

The detective rung the bell three times in rapid succession.

Then he paused and waited for a reply.

None came.

"Perhaps the house is not occupied," Joe Phenix observed musingly.

"Oh, yes it is, boss, 'cos I see'd lights in a couple of the windys when I come by the gate."

"That is good proof then that there is somebody in the house, and I will pull at the bell until they come." The detective too was prompt to suit the action to the word.

He allowed about a minute to elapse between each pull, and the newsboy watched his movements with great delight.

"By golly, boss, dem people in de house will git mighty sick of de sound of dat bell unless dey are all deaf and dumb!" Swipse exclaimed.

"It is my intention to have them out if I have to stay here all night!" Joe Phenix declared, as he gave another vigorous pull at the bell.

For fully ten minutes the detective kept on, and then his eyes were gladdened by the opening of the front door of the mansion, which was plainly visible from where the two stood outside of the gate.

As the house was only about a hundred feet from the gate, Joe Phenix, being gifted with the eyes of a hawk, was able to see that there were two men in the doorway.

"You fetched 'em at last!" Swipse cried, with a chuckle.

The boy took the greatest possible interest in the proceedings.

The men in the door peered out and appeared as if they had not made up their minds whether to come to the gate or not.

"They appear to be a little undecided," Joe Phenix remarked with a grim smile.

"But they may as well make up their minds to come and find out what I want, for I am not going away until I have a talk with them!" And then the detective gave the bell another pull.

Then the two came from the house and advanced down the walk to the gate.

As they came on the detective was able to get a good view of them, thanks to the bright rays of the moon.

Both were men well advanced in years. The one who came on in advance, apparently the principal of the two, was a tall, gaunt specimen of humanity, with strongly-marked features.

He was dressed in a well-worn black suit and had the look of a professional man.

His companion was a radical contrast to him in all respects, being short and stout with a red face, fringed with crispy, curling red hair, and a short beard of the same hue.

Long years of experience had made the veteran detective an excellent judge of character; then, too, naturally he was a man of wonderful discernment, and it had become a sort of a second nature for him to study all with whom he came in contact.

And on this occasion it did not take him long to come to a conclusion in regard to the two men advancing to the gate.

The opinion which he formed was an unfavorable one.

There was something about the two which made him believe that both of them would bear watching.

"What do you wish?" the tall, gaunt man asked as he approached the gate, casting an inquisitive glance at the detective, and the elfish-looking newsboy, peering through the iron bars.

"I am a detective officer," Joe Phenix replied, opening his coat so that his badge, fastened to the inside of it, could be seen.

"A detective officer!" exclaimed the old, gaunt man in surprise.

"Yes, and as I was coming along the main road over yonder I was attacked by two ruffians who evidently meant to rob me, but I was able to beat off the attack," Joe Phenix explained.

"Really, I am astonished!" the old gentleman exclaimed. "This is such a quiet neighborhood I would not have believed it could be possible for any such a thing to occur."

"One of the men ran down this road and took refuge in these grounds," the detective continued.

"Oh, no, my dear sir, you must be mistaken!" the old gentleman declared.

"The gate is locked as you will perceive, if you take the trouble to examine it, and so the man could not have passed through it."

"And you are positive that it was locked to-night?" Joe Phenix asked, considerably surprised by the statement.

"Oh, yes, I locked it myself at nine precisely!" the tall, gaunt man declared.

"It is a very mysterious circumstance," the detective observed.

"I was just a little further behind the man when he turned into this road than the gate is from the corner, but after I turned, the fellow was nowhere to be seen and this is the only place where he could have taken refuge; then too this lad, who was concealed in a clump of bushes across the way, saw the man go in at this gate."

"This is really a most mysterious affair," the old gentleman declared with a grave shake of the head.

"Very mysterious indeed!" the red-headed man explained.

"Do you understand it?" the gaunt man asked.

"No, sir, I do not. I must say that I am completely in the dark, doctor," the other answered.

From these speeches the detective gathered that both the men were professional gentlemen, as he had surmised, the tall gaunt man being a doctor, while the other was a professor.

"It is my opinion that both you and the young man there made a mistake in imagining that the fugitive took refuge in these grounds," the doctor remarked.

"No, sir-ee! nary a mistake!" Swipse declared in shrill tones.

"You kin bet yer sweet life, boss, dat I know what I am talking about!" he continued in the most positive way.

"I see'd de cove come pelting down de road, an' the moment I got on to him I s'pected dat he had been up to some mis-

chief, an' so I kept my peepers wide open, an' I'll take me oath dat he run t'rough dis 'ere gate!"

"I do not see how the boy could have made any mistake about the matter," Joe Phenix observed. "And as far as I am concerned I am satisfied that the man must have come through the gate, for in no other way could he have succeeded in getting out of my sight so quickly."

"If you will take the trouble to cast a glance around you you will see that it is not possible for a man to find any place where he could conceal himself in the near neighborhood."

"Yes, that certainly does seem to be a fact," the doctor observed.

"It is a remarkably mysterious affair," the professor declared.

"Of course, you understand, my dear sir, I am not the kind of a man to throw any obstacles in the path of justice!" the doctor declared.

"Although I cannot for the life of me imagine how the man could possibly gain admittance to my grounds, yet I am quite willing that you should search the premises," the doctor continued.

"I would be very much obliged to you if you would permit me to try the experiment," the detective responded.

"Certainly, of course, I hav'n't any objections," the doctor responded.

"Professor, will you have the kindness to get the key of the gate?" the old gentleman continued.

"You will find it hanging on one of the hooks of the hat-rack in the hall."

"I will have it here in a minute!" the other responded, then he hurried away.

"If the man is in the garden you will not have any difficulty in discovering him," the doctor observed. "For there is no chance for him to conceal himself except in the few clumps of bushes, and it will not take you long to examine them."

"And the fence is so high that it would be a difficult matter for a man to get over it," the detective observed.

"I should judge that it would be almost an impossibility unless the man was a professional acrobat," the doctor remarked.

The fence was indeed so high that any ordinary man would have had a hard time to surmount it, and then, as the detective followed so closely on the heels of the fugitive, he felt pretty certain that if the fellow had made any attempt to climb the fence he would have been able to have caught him in the act.

The professor returned with the key, the gate was unlocked, and Joe Phenix began his search of the garden, leaving Swipse to guard the gate.

The doctor and the professor accompanied the detective.

The search was soon made, for with the exception of the bushes there wasn't a hiding place for even a good sized dog.

No trace of the man could he find and the bloodhound was forced to depart unsatisfied.

The detective was a close observer and he fancied that he saw a twinkle of delight in the eyes of the others at his want of success.

He thanked them politely though for their assistance and then departed.

CHAPTER VII.

A DOUBTFUL EXPLANATION.

JOE PHENIX retraced his steps up the road, proceeding to the main avenue from which he had come, the boy marching along by his side, very proud at being in the company of so great a man as a real, live detective.

The acute bloodhound was considerably puzzled by this strange affair.

He was perfectly satisfied that the ruffian, whom he had pursued so closely, had gone into the garden of the lonely mansion, but what had become of him was a mystery.

As far as he could see there was only one explanation and that was, the fellow had sought refuge in the house.

He might be one of the servants attached to the mansion, and therefore familiar with the grounds.

It was possible too that he had a key to

the gate and so was able to go in and out at his pleasure without the knowledge of his employer.

The more the detective reflected upon the matter the greater became his conviction that he had hit upon the solution of the mystery.

He was annoyed by the boldness of the attack, and had made up his mind to capture the audacious footpads if he had to give up all other work to accomplish the feat.

And as he went on up the road he meditated over the matter.

The first thing to be done was to put a watch on the house so as to ascertain all about the inmates, and as the bloodhound speculated in regard to this the thought came to him that the newsboy, apparently being an extra sharp lad, would be just the one to undertake this task.

The detective spoke about the matter to the boy and the youth was delighted.

"Oh, yes, I am jest the kid to work a trick of that kind!" he declared, full of confidence in his ability to make a success out of the job.

"I kin jest lay low in the bushes and keep my peepers peeled so as to spot everybody what goes in or out," Swipsey continued.

"And take particular note of the tradesmen who may come in their wagons to take orders, or deliver goods: the butcher, baker, or grocery man, so I can interview them in regard to the people in the house."

"All right, boss, I will keep my eyes wide open, an' don't you forget it!" the boy exclaimed.

Joe Phenix had an idea that he might be able to get some information out of the man whom he had captured, for, as a rule, such fellows when they are caught in a tight place are generally ready to betray their pals if by so doing they can get out of the scrape themselves.

He had bound the man so securely that he felt pretty certain the fellow would not be able to get away when he recovered possession of his senses.

As he anticipated he found the footpad in nearly the same place in which he had left him.

The man had recovered from the effects of the blow which he had received and had managed to rise to a sitting position.

When Joe Phenix came up he was staring around him in a disconsolate way, evidently very much disgusted by his unpleasant predicament.

He had rolled out from the shadow of the bushes into the moonlight, and the detective was now able to get a good look at him.

The footpad was a short, thick-set fellow, young, not over twenty-two or three, and the experienced detective saw at a glance that he belonged to that class of young toughs who give the police of the metropolis so much trouble.

A dark and sullen look came over the face of the man as Joe Phenix came up, for the fellow suspected that the detective was the one who had made him a captive.

"You are in a pretty bad box," Joe Phenix, the man-hunter, exclaimed, as he halted in front of the ruffian, and cast a searching look in his face, for as the bloodhound had an extensive acquaintance among the criminal classes of New York he had an idea that the man might be one whom he knew.

The detective was not correct in this conjecture, though, for the fellow was a stranger.

"See here, this is all a mistake!" the man protested.

"A mistake, eh?" Joe Phenix queried.

"Yes; I ain't got anything ag'in' you!" the fellow declared.

"No doubt about that," the detective remarked. "For as you are a stranger to me, it would not be possible for you to have any grudge against me."

"I was a blamed fool to be led into the thing, anyway," the ruffian admitted.

"Well, considering the way the affair has turned out, there isn't much doubt that you are correct in regard to that, but I suppose you and your companion thought you could secure a good stake by assaulting me?"

"Oh, no, that wasn't our game at all!" the fellow declared.

"I ain't no thief!" the man continued, in

an injured way, and as he spoke he endeavored to assume an innocent look.

"If you did not intend to rob me, why was the attack made?" Joe Phenix asked, sharply.

"Well, now, boss, it won't take me long to explain the thing to you," the man replied. "And this is the way it came about. I have been playing in hard luck for over three weeks now on account of my losing my job in a stable down-town, since then I have been hunting high and low for work, and a friend of mine told me about a man who keeps a road-house on the King's Bridge road wanting a hostler, so I tramped out here to get the job, but I was too late, as usual; then arter I got through talking with the boss, and started to tramp back to the city, I met a bloke on the road who struck up a talk with me."

"He seemed to be a good-natured sort of a cove, and stood the beer three times, so we got quite thick, then he let on to me that he had a grudge ag'in' a bloke who was too big for him to tackle, and offered to give me a five-dollar note if I would help him to do his man up."

"And under the circumstances I don't doubt that you were glad to accept the offer," the detective observed.

"Oh, yes, you jest bet I was!" the fellow exclaimed. "I hadn't a cent to my name, and five dollars looks like a mighty big sum to a man who don't know where his next meal is coming from."

"Yes, that I can readily understand."

"So I went in with him to do his man; his idea was, you see, to give the bloke the worst kind of a licking, and as he said the feller was so big and strong that we didn't stand any chance with him unless we took him by surprise, the game was to lay low."

"This is a very good story, but I haven't had a trouble with anybody," the detective remarked.

"Of course—it is jest as I said in the beginning, it is all a mistake. You ain't the man at all!" the fellow exclaimed.

"But I am the man you attacked though!" Joe Phenix remarked in a sarcastic way.

"But it was done through a mistake. You are jest about the size of the cove that this other bloke wanted done up."

"How did you know that I wasn't the man if you don't know anything about him?" the detective asked.

"Easy ernuff!" the fellow replied with a confident air.

"The man we was a-going to do up was a German, and he was a young man, twenty-three or twenty-four, and you don't fill the bill at all."

"How did you come to make the mistake of attacking me then?" the detective queried.

"Cos the bloke was certain that you was the man; you see the shade of the trees hid your face when you got near so that we couldn't git a good idee of what you was like."

"Well, you have managed to tell a pretty good story," the detective observed. "But I fancy you will not be able to convince the police justice, before whom you will be brought to-morrow, that the yarn is correct unless you can succeed in getting the man who induced you to go into the affair to come forward and make a clean breast of it."

"Say, you ain't a-going to jail me, are you?" the man exclaimed in alarm.

"That is my little game just at present," Joe Phenix replied.

"Wot do you want to be hard on a feller for?" the man demanded in a whining way.

"You ain't been hurt any! Why can't you let up and let me go?"

"Oh, no, I do not do business in that way," Joe Phenix replied.

"In the first place I doubt this story of yours that I was mistaken for somebody else, for it is my idea that you and your companion are a couple of common robbers and you were lying in wait with the idea of attacking the first man who came along."

"Boss, I am willing to take my oath on a stack of Bibles that it ain't so!" the ruffian protested.

"Oh, I do not take any stock in your oath!" Joe Phenix declared.

"I know the class to which you belong too well to put any faith in what you say. You are in a tight place, and you will say

anything which you think will help you to get out of it, and that you and your pal did not damage me was through no fault of yours, for you assuredly tried hard enough."

"You are going to give me up to the cops then?" the man exclaimed with a scowl.

"Yes, and I shall not leave any stone unturned to capture your companion either."

"The only chance you have got is to turn state evidence and give the snap away."

"I have told you the truth, and if you don't believe me I can't help it!" the fellow replied, sullenly.

Finding that the man was obstinate the detective removed the fastenings from his ankles and marched him off to the nearest police station where he was duly charged with an attempt at highway robbery and sent to a cell, there to remain until the morning, when a police justice would pass upon the case.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE OCCUPANTS OF THE MANSION.

JOE PHENIX had taken the precaution to arrange a meeting place with the newsboy and told him to come at two in the afternoon, it being the detective's calculation that by that time Swipsey would be able to gain some information.

And as the man-hunter had made up his mind to find out all the particulars in regard to the inmates of the old mansion he assumed his German professor disguise, intending to play the role of a wanderer seeking for a friend, in which character he hoped to be able to prosecute his investigations without exciting any one's suspicion.

And certainly with his long, yellow locks combed back of his ears, his ancient spectacles and well-worn suit of black, he appeared to be a perfectly harmless old gentleman.

He had appeared at the police court that morning, by the way, as an accuser against the man whom he had arrested.

The fellow gave his name as Edward Mucker—Teddy Mucker his chums called him, he explained, and he stuck steadfast to his story that he had been hired to "do" the detective by an unknown stranger, whom he had never seen before, and therefore of whom he knew nothing.

None of the police knew anything to the man's discredit; in fact, he was a stranger to all of them, detectives and policemen alike.

But from the fact that the man showed that he "knew the ropes" by electing to be tried at Special Sessions, and one of the most eminent criminal lawyers in the city appeared as his counsel, the thought came to the acute detective that the man was a regular crook, who had been lucky enough to avoid the satellites of the law heretofore.

And if he was a crook, the odds were great that his companion, who had escaped in such a mysterious manner, was a crook also, and the man-hunter resolved to do his best to get at the heart of the mystery, for he had a suspicion that in this odd way he had got on the track of a dangerous band of rascals.

Swipsey was on hand at the time appointed, but the boy had but little to tell.

"I have been on the watch outside dat old shanty ever since six o'clock," the boy declared. "And jest as sure as I stand here dere ain't been any butcher, or baker, or milkman or grocerman, or any odder kind of a wagon come to de gate."

"They, probably, go after their supplies instead of having them brought to them," the detective observed.

"I reckon they does, boss, for dat tall old man w'ot looks like a walkin' skelinton, he went out in a buggy dis morning, an' when he came back 'bout a hour afterward I see'd dat he had a hull lot of bundles in de carriage."

"That explains why the tradesmen's wagons do not come to the house."

"Well, keep on the watch and I will be along the road about ten o'clock to-night; by that time you may be able to pick up some information of value," the man-hunter continued.

"Oh, you kin jest bet your sweet life dat I will keep my eyes open!" Swipsey declared.

"I say, boss, dis ere get-up of yours is fu'st class!" the boy continued, surveying the disguised detective with a critical eye. "I reckon dat I am about as sharp as they make

'em, but I would never have knowed you in de world!"

Joe Phenix smiled in his quiet way and bade the boy keep a good watch.

"You bet your boots I will!" Swipsey declared as he took his departure.

"I cannot play the game in the way that I expected," the detective mused, as he proceeded on his way.

"As the man evidently keeps the tradesmen of the neighborhood at arm's length it will not be possible to learn anything from them, but the chances are good though that from some of the people who live in the vicinity of the mansion I may be able to gain some information," he continued.

"If there is something crooked about the man, as I suspect, he surely will be sharp enough to give out some plausible tale to account for his presence in the neighborhood, for he will certainly be aware that if he attempts to keep his neighbors from finding out all about him, suspicion would be immediately excited that something was wrong, and, in time, the attention of the police would be called to him; and that, of course, is the very last thing that such a man as he is would desire."

By this time the disguised detective had reached the road upon which the mansion of the tall, gaunt gentleman was situated, but it was the upper end of the road that Joe Phenix now came upon, a good half-mile from that portion of it where he had pursued the fleeing footpad.

There were only half-a-dozen houses in the street, and the game that the acute detective played was to call at each house and inquire concerning a certain German professor, Herr Wolf, whom he pretended he was anxious to find.

Of course, nobody knew anything about such a man—it would have been strange if they had, considering that he was a creature of the detective's imagination.

Then, in the course of the conversation, the seeker after information spoke about the lonely mansion down the road, suggesting it was possible that the gentleman whom he desired to see might live there.

But he could not gain any information about the inmates of the house until he came to a little cottage which was on the same side of the road as the lonely mansion, and the next house to it.

An old Englishman, and his wife, resided in the cottage, a talkative couple, and they knew all about the people who lived in the lonely mansion.

There were two servants there, a man and his wife, both English, and from the pair the old couple had procured their information.

The master of the house was named Tobias Hunnawalt; he was a doctor by profession, but had retired from active practice and had now turned his attention to scientific inventions, in which he was assisted by his associate, the short, red-headed man who was named Solomon Magilton and was a professor.

The old Englishman was not exactly clear as to what the red-bearded man was a professor of; all he could say was that the servants and the doctor called him professor.

Then there were the two servants, Martin Hitchcraft, and his wife, Betsy.

It took the disguised detective a good half-hour to learn all these particulars, and when he departed from the cottage he felt that the information which he had gained could not be of much benefit to him.

He had not neglected to inquire concerning the house with the brick garden wall, alleging that the mythical Mr. Wolf had told him that he resided in the neighborhood of such a place, but no one knew anything about a mansion with a brick garden wall, so Joe Phenix came to the conclusion that the house from whence the girl had sent the mysterious message was not in the neighborhood.

"Well, it certainly must be admitted that I am not getting ahead very fast on either of the cases," the disguised detective remarked, communing with himself as was his custom when puzzled.

"But the mansion remains, and after I have had a talk with the people there I may be able to come to some conclusion regarding them.

"At present I am rather inclined to regard them as suspicious characters.

"According to the account given by the Englishman, and his wife, there is only one man servant on the place, and if I can succeed in getting a look at him perhaps I will be able to tell whether he is the man who attacked me last night or not."

Fortune favored the disguised man-hunter for when he rung the bell at the front door it was the man-servant, Martin Hitchcraft, who answered the summons.

He was a typical Englishman in appearance, rather undersized, but stoutly built.

A man of forty or thereabouts, with a sullen and evil-looking face, but close observer as was the veteran detective, yet he was not able to decide whether this was the man whom he had pursued so hotly or not.

The footpad was a man of about the same build, but Joe Phenix fancied that he was a little shorter, still that might be owing to the fact that he was running at full speed, and the moonlight made him appear different from what he really was.

That the fellow was a rascal the man-hunter felt satisfied from his face, yet he was not positive enough about the man to be certain that he was the ruffian who had attacked him.

It was the detective's game to gain speech with the master of the mansion, and so he declared that he wished to speak with the gentleman of the house in person.

The doctor happened to be in a room next to the entry with the door ajar, and overhearing the request, immediately made his appearance.

The disguised detective saluted him with the greatest respect, and explained how anxious he was to find his friend, Herr Wolf.

The doctor replied that as he was a stranger in the neighborhood he was not well acquainted with the people who occupied the surrounding houses, but as far as he knew no such person lived near.

The seeker after knowledge then explained that his friend had told him that he lived in the neighborhood of a mansion surrounded by a brick wall.

This announcement served to disturb the doctor for he became nervous, said he was very busy, and the caller must excuse him, thus dismissing the supposed German with scant ceremony.

Joe Phenix departed more perplexed than ever.

CHAPTER IX.

THE BREWER'S SON.

"UPON my word this is one of the greatest puzzles that I ever encountered," Joe Phenix muttered as he came out of the gate of the mansion and walked down the road.

"The old fellow seemed to be decidedly disturbed when I spoke about the house with the brick wall," the disguised detective continued. "And that fact would seem to imply that he knew something about such a place, or else my mentioning the matter would not disturb him.

"Can it be possible that this is the house and that these two men, the doctor and the professor, are the ones whom the girl mentions in her communication?"

And as he spoke the bloodhound cast a searching glance at the high board fence which completely surrounded the house.

The place was quite an extensive one, covering some eight city lots, the grounds running back to the next street.

"Perhaps it would not be a bad idea to take a look at the rear of the premises," Joe Phenix soliloquized.

"Possibly there is a brick wall there."

Acting on this idea the detective made a wide detour, and came down the street upon which the grounds of the mansion backed, but the high wooden fence was there as well as at the sides, and in the front.

"Really this is a most mysterious business," Joe Phenix declared as he retraced his steps toward the main road—the one upon which he had been when assaulted by the footpads on the preceding night.

Just as he got within a hundred feet of the road a couple of young, well-dressed men came along.

Joe Phenix stared in surprise for a mo-

ment, for one of the two, in figure, was the exact counterpart of himself when he appeared in his natural guise.

In features too the stranger bore a considerable resemblance to the detective, having the same massive face, but the young man had blue eyes and flaxen hair of the German type.

The moment Joe Phenix saw how great was the resemblance which the stranger bore to himself, the declaration of the footpad whom he had captured, that the attack on him was a mistake, came back to his mind.

"This man and I do look enough alike for one to be taken for the other in the dusk of a moonlight night," he mused.

The keen-eyed detective noted, too, that the young man wore a handsome diamond pin, and displayed a heavy gold watch-chain.

"If the pair had got away with that young man, they would have stood a good chance to make a handsome stake, I should judge from his appearance, and I should not be surprised if the ruffians did make a mistake and attack me for him, but it wasn't done for the purpose of squaring any grudge; oh, no! the scamps were after plunder, and doubtless expected to make a rich haul out of this young man. Probably they would have succeeded in doing so, too, if I had not happened to come along, and so spoiled the game.

"By the way, it would not do any harm for me to see who that young man is!" the disguised detective observed, abruptly.

"I really feel decidedly interested in this double of mine, and I have a curiosity to learn who and what he is," Joe Phenix continued.

Having come to this determination the veteran detective, when he came to the main road, followed slowly on after the two.

A short eighth of a mile up the road was a magnificent estate.

House and grounds were elaborate in the extreme, and all about the place seemed to show that the owner was a man of great wealth.

Into this lonely mansion the two young men went.

There was a man at work on the lawn, in close proximity to the front gate, and this person the disguised detective accosted.

He was a good-natured Irishman, inclined to be talkative, and from him the bloodhound learned all that he wished to know.

The young man who bore such a strong resemblance to himself was the owner of the mansion, by name Jacob Shubaugh, son of the great brewer, Jacob Shubaugh who gained a colossal fortune by putting on the market a brand of extra good beer which he named Bohemian after the country from which he came.

The old man had been dead for a year or so and the son, who was an only child, had inherited all his wealth.

The other young man was called Workman, and he was the confidential man of business of the old brewer's son.

Thanking the Irishman for this information the disguised detective went on his way.

"There isn't much doubt that the rascal spoke the truth when he said that he and his companion made a mistake in attacking me," Joe Phenix remarked, communing with himself as he went on.

"It was this young fellow whom they were after and they would have scooped in a good stake if I had not come along and upset the game, but things of that kind will happen in this uncertain life of ours."

Then Joe Phenix went on in his search for the house with the brick garden wall.

He had the memoranda, obtained from the expressman, and he went over the route in the most careful manner, but no trace could he find of the house which he sought.

The veteran detective though was not a man to give up a pursuit until he had exhausted all possible means to attain success.

He called at the local post-office and interviewed the letter-carriers, men who from the nature of their work have a knowledge of all the houses in their districts, but none of them could give him any information.

Then he went to the police station, and

had a talk with the patrolmen, but the policemen knew no more about the mansion with the brick garden wall than did the letter-carriers.

The veteran detective was decidedly annoyed by his ill-success.

"Can it be possible that this message on the shingle is an ingenious hoax?" he murmured.

"Did some practical joker arrange the matter with the idea of sending the man who was unlucky enough to find the shingle on a wild goose chase?"

Joe Phenix meditated over the matter for a few moments and then exclaimed:

"I am not at all satisfied with that explanation. The message certainly seemed to bear the impress of truth, and I cannot bring myself to believe that it is the work of any practical joker.

"The expressman must have made some mistake in regard to his route and that is why I am not able to find the house.

"I will call upon the superintendent of the office, and from him I can get the correct route."

As the man-hunter had exhausted all the sources of information which he could get at, he was compelled to come to a halt.

He was very much dissatisfied with his ill-success.

Long years of experience in the thief-taking line had sharpened his wits so he seemed to detect rogues by instinct, and this instinct told him that there was something wrong about the doctor and the professor.

Although he knew absolutely nothing about them, yet he was satisfied that the pair were not honest men.

Just what particular form of roguery they were up to was more than he could tell, but he was satisfied that they were engaged in some crooked work, and this is why he made up his mind to keep an eye upon them.

He met the newsboy according to appointment but the lad had nothing to report.

The detective gave him money and instructed him to still keep on the watch, then, as there was nothing more for him to do up-town, the detective proceeded to his home.

In the morning, having doffed his disguise, he went to the transfer office and had an interview with the superintendent.

After he explained his business the official was only too glad to oblige the distinguished detective, but when an examination of the book was made Joe Phenix discovered that the expressman had given him the correct route.

Thanking the superintendent for his courtesy the detective departed, feeling decidedly annoyed by his ill-success.

"I cannot bring myself to believe that the message was a hoax," he murmured as he took his way down-town to his office. "And yet, at present, I must admit that it looks very much as if it was one, for if the house exists, how comes it that I am not able to find it?"

CHAPTER X.

GENERAL JINGO.

THIS was a problem that Joe Phenix "wrestled" with all the way to his office, but the more he pondered over the matter the greater the puzzle seemed to become.

The detective found his assistant, Tony Western, in charge of the office.

To those readers who have perused the series of novels in which the renowned man-hunter, Joe Phenix, has been the hero, Tony Western, the able lieutenant of his chief, is no stranger, and to those who now are introduced for the first time to that worthy we will simply say that Western was a most able aid to the greatest thief-taker that the metropolis has ever known.

In response to Joe Phenix's inquiry in regard to business, Tony Western answered that there wasn't anything new.

The veteran detective then seated himself at his desk, looked over the letters which had accumulated during his absence, gave orders to Tony Western regarding the answers, and then took up the morning newspaper.

Before he had read a dozen lines through, Tony Western made his appearance from

the outer office with the intelligence that a gentleman desired to see Mr. Phenix on a little matter of business.

The detective gave orders to admit him, and Tony Western at once ushered the stranger into the office.

He was a man of forty-five, or thereabouts, magnificently built, with the brawn and muscle of a champion heavy-weight prize-fighter, and if he was not a pugilist, that he belonged to the sporting world was amply evidenced by his peculiar manner.

He was neatly dressed in a dark business suit, but his display of jewelry was rather loud, and the diamond horseshoe pin which he wore on his scarf seemed to indicate that he was partial to the turf.

The man had a rather pleasant face, although it was seamed and scarred as though the owner had experienced considerable hardship at some time in his life.

"Is this Mr. Phenix?" the stranger asked with a polite bow.

"That is my name."

"I have taken the liberty of calling upon you to get a little professional advice," the man explained.

"Take a chair, sir; I shall be happy to accommodate you to the best of my ability."

With a courteous bow the stranger took a seat.

"I presume that I may speak freely without danger of being overheard?" he said with a curious glance around.

"Yes, sir, you can do so; be under no apprehension on that score," Joe Phenix replied.

"Although I am a stranger to you, Mr. Phenix, yet by reputation you are not to me," the stranger remarked.

The detective bowed.

"Your reputation as a fair and square man is A No. 1!" the other declared.

"Well, sir, I have always tried to do the right thing by everybody," Joe Phenix replied.

"I am aware of that, Mr. Phenix, and that is the reason why I have called on you to-day. I need the advice of a good, square man, a sharp who is well up in legal matters, and when I came to cogitate about who I had better see I happened to think of you."

"Well, I am not a lawyer, you know," the veteran detective observed.

"Oh, yes, I am aware of that fact, and strange as it may appear to you, although the advice which I want can only be given by a man who has a good knowledge of legal matters yet I don't care to consult a lawyer."

"How is that?" the detective asked, rather surprised by the declaration.

"Because I haven't got any faith in lawyers," the stranger replied, immediately.

"Maybe I have had the misfortune to meet with a bad lot of them," he continued in a thoughtful way.

"But my experience is that when a man goes to the average legal shark and states a case, the aforesaid shark always says: 'Oh, yes, my dear sir, you are decidedly in the right, your case is a very strong one indeed, and there isn't any doubt that if you intrust me with it that I can win easily.'"

Joe Phenix smiled.

"Well, I suppose the average lawyer is usually inclined to believe that every man who comes to him stands a good fighting chance to win," he remarked.

"Why, certainly! A lawyer is only a man, and he has got to look out for his bread and butter like the rest of us, and this fact makes them mighty unreliable at times, for the same man who is so ready to tell me that I have got the finest kind of a case would be just as ready to tell the fellow on the other side that he had such a dead sure thing of it that he couldn't lose."

Joe Phenix smiled again as he nodded assent.

"There is undoubtedly a deal of truth in what you say," the detective admitted.

"Exactly! and that is why they are apt to give a man some mighty bad advice at times."

"Now then, I have come to the conclusion that a man like yourself will not be prejudiced, and so I can depend upon getting a straight opinion from you."

"I will certainly do the best I can for you, but as I am not a lawyer it is possible that my knowledge of legal matters may not be sufficient to enable me to give you the advice which you require."

"Oh, I am not worrying at all about that!" the stranger declared in a confident way.

"A man like yourself who has done as much hustling around courts as you have must be able to post me all right."

"Very well; I will do the best I can for you," Joe Phenix declared.

"That is all I want, and I am satisfied that you can fill the bill!" the other remarked, confidently.

"And now I will introduce myself as a preliminary to the explanation," the stranger continued.

"I don't doubt that you have heard of me, although this is the first time that we have ever met, because I am somewhat of a public character, and my name often gets into the newspapers."

"I am called George Jingo, but as a rule about everybody calls me General Jingo."

"Ah, yes, I have frequently heard of you," the detective observed.

"You are interested in sporting matters?" Joe Phenix continued.

"Yes, I am what is called an all-round sport," the other explained.

"In my younger days I did a little in the prize ring, and was able to hold my own with some of the best of them, but it was a business that never was agreeable to me, and I cut it as soon as I could."

"Then I went on the turf, and, in fact, have been mixed up with all sorts of games."

"Yes, I have seen your name mentioned in the newspapers in connection with sporting matters."

"I have done very well in that line and as I am a prudent, careful man, having sense enough to keep my money when I am lucky enough to make any, I am about as well-fixed as any man in the business, but that is neither here nor there, excepting that it goes to show what kind of a man I am."

"It is in my remembrance that the newspapers always spoke of you in the highest manner."

"Oh, yes, I have the reputation of being as square as they make them," the general declared.

"And the boys have confidence in me too," he continued.

"They are always anxious to get me to act as referee, stakeholder, or something of that kind, as they are certain that I will give them a square deal for their money."

"Well, it is pleasant for a man to have a reputation of that kind."

"Yes, it makes me feel good when the boys come out and say they are willing to trust me, and I can tell you, Mr. Phenix, I always do my best to see that they all have a fair show."

"That is correct, of course."

"And now to come down to business," the general remarked in his brisk, lively way. "About a week ago I happened to run across a poor fellow who was playing in the hardest kind of luck, and as I happened to be pretty flush at the time I put out a few dollars on him."

"Perhaps you are not aware, Mr. Phenix, that we sporting men are a little inclined to be superstitious about some things," he continued.

"If a regular thorough-going sport is at all flush he thinks it is unlucky for him to go by a beggar without giving a trifle, a few cents, or a bit of silver, just according to how he is fixed."

"Yes, I am aware of the custom," the detective replied.

"A sport depends a good deal on luck for his money, and so he is always anxious to do all he can to make luck come his way," the general explained.

"That is only natural, and it is not the sports alone who are given to superstition," Joe Phenix remarked.

"For from my experience I am aware that a large number of sober, steady, solid business men are great believers in good and bad luck."

"Take the great money kings of Europe, the Rothschilds for instance. It is stated that they will not give employment to a man who has ever failed in business, from a superstition that the man's ill luck will follow him and interfere in their affairs."

"Well, those fellows are as bad as any sport that I ever heard of," the general observed.

"But to come back to my mutton. This man was in such a condition that I was afraid that he would die in the street, so I took him to my room, and had him doctored up, but he will not last long, for the man is naturally weak, and then he has led an awful life of it, and Mr. Phenix you can't fool with nature, you know!" the sport declared with the air of a prophet.

"A man may think that he is smart enough to cheat the old dame, but in the long run she will get back at him in a way that he will despise."

"Ah, yes, that is very true indeed," the detective asserted.

"This man is thirty-three, I should judge, but he looks to be a deuced sight older than I do, and no one would take me for a chicken, you know," the sport declared, with a grin.

"Yes, but as you have evidently taken care of yourself, you are well preserved," Joe Phenix affirmed.

"That is the truth. I have always contrived to get enough to eat and drink, and I never allowed liquor to get the best of me, and that is just what the trouble has been with this man that I am telling you about."

"He has ruined his constitution by indulging in the juice of old King Barley-corn, and I don't believe that he has got a year's life in him."

"And now to come to the point. The fellow was grateful to me, for he declared that I had dragged him from death's door, and he said that if I was willing to go into a scheme which he could arrange, it would bring a pot of money."

"That was an encouraging prospect, if the man could do anything of the kind, but such men have very visionary ideas sometimes," the veteran detective observed.

"Yes, I am aware of that," the sport responded.

"The world is full of cranks, and I have run up against a good number of them in my time," the general continued.

"And when this man gave out this yarn, I took it to be a ghost story of the flimsiest kind, and as I am a plain, straight-forward sort of a chap, I did not hesitate to tell him so, too, but he insisted that the game was as square as square could be, and then he gave me the lay-out."

"He was a native born American, but the son of a foreigner who had come to this country when a young man and married a girl in the small Connecticut city where he had worked."

"When he was about five years old his father got a chance to come to New York, but the wife and child remained in Connecticut, and the father used to come down and stay over Sunday every month or so."

"This boy, according to his own admission grew up wild and reckless, and when he was twelve years old ran away from home and shipped as a cabin-boy."

"Wished to become a sailor, eh?" the detective observed.

"Yes, and as a sailor he went about all around the world until at last, when broken down with sickness he concluded to go home to Connecticut and see his mother."

"Ah yes, that is the style of a good many of these rovers," Joe Phenix remarked.

"As long as they have their health and can get along they do not trouble their heads about the folks at home, but when the clouds of adversity hover around them then they turn to the parent nest."

"Yes, that is so," the sport assented.

"Well, when he arrived at Bridgeport, that was the city where he was born, he discovered, after a good deal of trouble, that his mother had been dead for over ten years, and no one knew anything about his father."

"Then he came to New York in search of the old man."

"All he had to go upon was that his father's name was so and so, and he was a brewer by trade."

"With such clues as that to aid him he ought to have been able to discover what he wanted to know."

"He did make some discoveries, but they were of such a nature that he was puzzled how to proceed."

"He got on the track of a man whom he believed to be his father, but for quite a time he hesitated to approach him."

"How was that?" the detective asked.

"Because the position which the man, whom he supposed to be his father occupied, was so different from what he expected that he was puzzled how to proceed."

"The man had been at the head of one of the largest brewing establishments in the city and was reported to be worth two or three millions of dollars."

"No wonder that the seeker after knowledge was astonished."

"And not only that but the man had a wife here in New York, who had died only a year or so before and a son, who as his sole heir, would come in for all the money which the old man might leave."

"It is the old story of the man having two families over again."

"Yes, unless this fellow has made some mistake about the matter, and got hold of the wrong man," the general observed in his sharp, shrewd way.

"Very true; there is a chance that a mistake of that kind could be made," Joe Phenix remarked.

"Now the man has made a proposal for me to go into the game," the sport explained.

"He wants me to take charge of his affairs and see if I cannot get something out of the estate for him—the father is now dead, by the way—agreeing to pay me a handsome commission if I am successful."

"That is no more than right, for it will not be an easy task," the veteran detective observed, after meditating over the matter for a few moments.

"But here is a point which has been troubling me," the sport observed.

"No doubt that the young man who has got the money will kick like a steer when he finds that there is a claimant who is anxious to get some of the ducats, and the question came up in my mind, is there any danger, if I go into this thing, of my being hauled up on a charge of blackmail?"

"On, no," Joe Phenix replied, immediately.

"There isn't?"

"Not the slightest!"

"Suppose that this man's story is not true—suppose that he has made a mistake, either willfully or through accident, and the truth comes out that the dead millionaire is no kin to him at all, wouldn't it be apt to put me in a bad box?" the sport asked.

"Oh, no, that does not follow," the detective replied.

"In order to make trouble for you it would have to be proven that you had entered into a conspiracy with this man to extort money from the party in possession of the estate; but if the man tells a plain, straightforward story, and it appears on the face of it that he has a claim to the money left by the dead brewer, you have a perfect right to take an interest in the matter, and advance money to assist him to make his claim good."

"Well, I am not a lawyer, you know, and do not pretend to know much about the law but that is the way it looked to me," the general observed.

"It is a sort of a speculation, and I thought I was justified in going into it," he continued. "I shall have to lay out some money to enable the man to establish his claim, but if the thing goes through I will pull in a good big stake for my trouble."

"If you were aware, of your own knowledge, that the fellow was an impostor, and you and he got up the scheme, then, if the other party was able to prove it, you might be hauled over the coals; but as it is, you have a perfect right to go into the enterprise," the veteran detective decided.

"It is just as I told you," the general explained. "The man is a stranger to me, but he related a plain, straight-forward story and narrated it in such a way that it seemed to be the truth, and as it appeared to be a good speculation I made up my mind to go into it."

"You were perfectly justified in so doing," Joe Phenix asserted.

"Of course, I understand that it is going to be an up-hill fight, for the other side can afford to spend plenty of money, and they have got it too to put out, which is a mighty important fact in a case of this kind."

"Oh, yes, no doubt about that."

"Well, I am much obliged for your advice, Mr. Phenix," the sport remarked.

"You see, I had confidence in your judgment, and that is why I wanted to see what you thought about the matter."

"Then, too, as there will have to be some detective work done—which, of course, is right in your line, I wanted to secure you to look after it," he continued.

"All right, I will attend to the matter for you."

"As I said before, I am not much posted in legal matters, but when I became interested in this affair I went ahead in a common-sense sort of way."

"I have had the making of a good many sporting matches in my time," the general explained, "and have the reputation of seeing that my principal does not get the worst of the bargain," and the sport indulged in a sly chuckle.

"Yes, I can recall the fact of having seen you spoken of in the newspapers as being an extremely shrewd match-maker," the detective remarked.

"Well, now, when you come right down to the facts in the case I simply go ahead in a common-sense sort of way, that is all, and when I made up my mind to go into this speculation, the first thing I did was to try to find out what chance there was for my man to win."

"That was the correct course to follow," Joe Phenix observed. "A man would be foolish to go in blindly."

"Yes, that is my idea, and after the man got through with his story, and made the proposal for me to go in with him, the first thing I did was to say to him, 'How do you know that you are the son of this brewer—how can you prove that you are the eldest child of Jacob Shubaugh?'"

"Jacob Shubaugh!" the detective exclaimed, in surprise.

"Yes, that is the name—did you know him?" the general asked.

"No, not personally, only by reputation."

CHAPTER XI.

THE SPORT'S STORY.

A CERTAIN distinguished writer has remarked that after all this world is not so large, for we are continually meeting people whom we did not expect to see.

And in this instance Joe Phenix was annoyed that in this strange fashion he should be called upon to take an active interest in the affairs of the young man, who bore such a likeness to himself, and of whose existence he had not been aware until the day before.

True, he knew that Jacob Shubaugh had been one of the largest, and most successful of all the New York brewers, for the old man spent money with a liberal hand in advertising the merits of his celebrated Bohemian beer.

He was aware that the brewer had been gathered to his fathers, for the old man had had a most elaborate funeral, all duly described in the newspapers, but as very little had been said about the dead man's family, the fact that all the old brewer's wealth had descended to a single heir, had escaped his memory.

"You were proceeding in the right direction when you put a plain question of that kind," the detective remarked after a pause.

"I went on this idea, if he was able to show me that he was the dead brewer's son—convince me, you understand, so I would be satisfied that he was what he represented himself to be, then he might stand some chance of making the world at large believe there was something in his story."

"That was sound reasoning, certainly," Joe Phenix remarked.

"Then he explained that after he returned to Bridgeport, and discovered that his mother was dead, he came on to New York in search of his father," the general explained.

"He arrived here about a month before the time when old Jacob was so suddenly stricken down," the sport continued.

"I recollect the particulars of the death; the brewer had a stroke while sitting in his office, and died an hour or so afterward without recovering his senses."

"Yes, and this party says that he had an interview with the old man just before the stroke occurred."

"The old man did not attempt to deny that this party was his son, after he satisfied himself in regard to his identity, but on the plea that he was not feeling well enough to discuss any business at that time dismissed him with the injunction to come on the morrow, and as my man said he was short of cash, gave him a ten-dollar note."

"The old man must have been satisfied that he was all right or else he would not have given him money," the detective observed in a reflective way.

"Exactly! it struck me that it was a pretty strong point," the sport remarked.

"Well, now, what do you suppose the man did?"

"I haven't an idea," Joe Phenix replied.

"The natural-born idiot, with a fortune in his grasp, went off on a spree—fell in with some tough characters, got into a fight and was so badly injured that he was laid up in a hospital for over three months!" the sport exclaimed in a tone which plainly revealed how disgusted he was by such foolishness.

"There are some men in this world who are always making mistakes of that kind," Joe Phenix remarked.

"Well, any one would think that with so much depending on his behaving himself the man would have had the strength to resist temptation for a while."

"Men of that kind have no balance wheel and cannot be depended upon."

"Very true, and it is astonishing how many of the kind there are," the general observed.

"Well, while my man was in the hospital he did not dare to let his father know anything about the matter for fear that the old man would be angry with him for being fool enough to get into such a disgraceful scrape," the sport continued.

"Under the circumstances it was only natural for him to want to keep the matter quiet," the detective remarked.

"But when he came out of the hospital his father was dead and buried."

"That must have been considerable of a disappointment to the man."

"Yes, for his resources were utterly exhausted, and he was at his wits' end what to do until he happened to meet me."

"It was a lucky chance for him," Joe Phenix observed.

"Very true, for the man was not only broke but in such a condition that he couldn't do any work," the sport explained.

"Well, in answer to my question how could he prove that he was the son of the old brewer he related the particulars of his interview with him."

"That is all very good," I said, "but, my friend, that isn't any legal proof, you know, for I don't suppose you have got anything to back up the statement."

Joe Phenix nodded in an approving way.

"He admitted that he hadn't, and that as far as the interview went it did not amount to much."

"Decidedly not, for any one could relate such a story."

"The man was sharp enough to see that his statement did not amount to anything, and then he said there were plenty of people in Bridgeport who knew that he was Jacob Shubaugh's son, and he would not have any difficulty in proving his identity, for he had some peculiar birth-marks and the doctor who attended his mother at his birth was still alive."

"That is good, strong evidence," Joe Phenix remarked.

"It was the same doctor who attended his mother in her last illness, and at her request, summoned the husband by telegraph from New York, so he could prove that the New York Jacob Shubaugh was the father of this Lemuel Shubaugh."

"He would be a witness whose testimony would be hard to get over."

"And my man says there are three or four more men who know these facts, and can testify to them."

"Apparently the man has a clear case, but there is evidently something wrong somewhere," the veteran detective said in a thoughtful manner.

"If the old brewer had a wife in Connecticut, and another one here in New York, he must have committed bigamy, for the law does not allow a man to have two legal

wives at the same time," Joe Phenix continued.

"That is just what I suggested to my man and he replied immediately that his father only had one legal wife, and that was his mother, for he married her in Connecticut long before he came to New York."

"Ah, yes, but can he prove that to be a fact?" the detective asked in his shrewd way.

"Jacob Shubaugh was no fool and it does not seem probable to me that he would be idiot enough to marry a wife in this State if he already had a legal wife in Connecticut."

"That is just exactly what I said to him, but he replied that his father was a self-willed, impetuous man, while his mother was a timid little woman, who was a perfect slave to her husband, and never even dreamed of crossing him in any way, so that if she had discovered that he had another wife in New York, she would never have thought of trying to make any trouble for him on account of it."

"Ah, yes, there are a great many women in the world who submit to being wronged in such a way."

"He is ten years older than the son in this city, young Jacob, who inherited the money," the general argued. "And that would seem to imply that he really has the best right to the cash."

"That appears to be so, but I am apprehensive that your man will find that it will be a difficult matter for him to prove that his mother was legally married to his father."

"Your man is about thirty-three, I take it," the detective said, abruptly.

"Yes, somewhere about that age," the general replied.

"So that we must go back thirty-four years or more to prove the legality of the marriage, and thirty-four years is a long time, you know," Joe Phenix observed in a thoughtful way.

"Yes, that is very true."

"And thirty-four years ago the authorities were not as particular in keeping the records of marriages, births and deaths as they are now."

"I presume not."

"And, of course, while it is not possible for me to form a correct opinion in regard to a case of this kind, yet I am inclined to believe that it will be a pretty hard job to establish the legality of this marriage," Joe Phenix declared.

"Will not the fact that the pair were known as man and wife go a great way?" the sport asked.

"In this State it would, for if a man and woman live together, and acknowledge each other in the presence of witnesses as man and wife, the ceremony is as binding, and as legal as any that can be performed, but the Connecticut law does not recognize any such union as being legal; a regular ceremony, performed by a duly qualified person, is necessary."

"Oho! I didn't know that!" the sport exclaimed. "I had an idea that as the property was situated in this State our laws here would cover the marriage question."

"No, not unless the parties lived as man and wife in this State," the detective replied.

"According to the man's story, as nearly as I can make out, there was a difference of about ten years between the two marriages, that is, assuming that there were two ceremonies, which I very much doubt, for I don't believe that the old brewer was fool enough to run the risk of State Prison by committing bigamy."

"Yes, about ten years, I should judge," the sport replied.

"Now then, as far as I can see, there is just one chance for your man," the acute detective remarked.

"Ah, you think there is a chance?" the general cried, eagerly.

"Yes, and I am assuming too that the first so-called wife was not married to the brewer according to the Connecticut law."

"I comprehend."

"Well, if during this ten years' time, before he took up with the New York woman, if he happened to bring the Connecticut wife to this city, and at a hotel or boarding-house registered, and acknowledged her as his wife—and to my thinking the chances are great that he might have done so—then

she would be his legal wife according to the laws of this State."

"Yes, yes, of course, and the second wife and her children wouldn't have any claim," the sport observed.

"None at all."

"Upon my word it really looks then as if the fellow had a good fighting chance, as these lawyers say!" the general exclaimed.

"Yes, that is certainly true, but the difficulty will be to prove that such an event took place," the veteran detective explained.

"Perhaps my man will be able to give us some information on that point," the sport suggested.

"Very likely, for as a child he may have accompanied his mother."

"I say, suppose you come up to my room and have a talk with the man," the sport suggested.

"I would bring him down here but he is so utterly worn out that he isn't really fit to come down-town," the general continued.

"Very well: I can go with you immediately as I haven't anything on hand to detain me."

"I shall be much obliged."

"Don't mention it!"

CHAPTER XII.

JINGO'S QUARTERS.

THE two men went on their quest.

During the trip General Jingo explained that he kept "bachelor's hall" in a small flat on one of the up-town numbered streets near Broadway.

"It is handy once in a while to have apartments of this sort when a small and select party want to indulge in a little game of poker," the sport remarked.

"You see it is possible for me to entertain gentlemen of wealth and standing in private apartments of this kind who would not be seen in a public gambling-house for any amount of money."

"These first-class fellows are very fond of a good, stiff game once in a while if they feel sure that no one will get onto the fact, and they know very well that when they come to my quarters they are as safe from intrusion as if they were in their own houses."

Joe Phenix nodded assent. He understood perfectly how fond of this sort of thing some men are who hold their heads very high in the business and professional world.

As the genial sport had said, the detective found that the man who was setting up a claim to the dead brewer's millions was a mere wreck, but from the likeness which he bore to the young man whom Joe Phenix had followed to his elaborate mansion the detective felt sure the sufferer told the truth when he declared that he was a son of old Jacob Shubaugh.

Joe Phenix got the man to tell his story and took notes as he went on, and then in a careless way he asked if his mother had ever been in the habit of paying visits to New York after the father found work in the metropolis.

The man answered that she had, it being her custom to come to New York once a year just before Christmas and remain for a week or ten days; he could remember going with her, when very young, on these trips.

"Can you recall where your mother stayed during these sojourns in the city?" the wily detective asked, being careful to put the question in a careless and indifferent way as though he did not attach much importance to it.

The man reflected over the question for a few moments, and then replied that it was not possible for him to remember.

He and his mother had put up at some hotel, but what the name of the house was, or where it was situated he could not recall.

"Probably the hotel where your father boarded?" Joe Phenix remarked, carelessly.

The sick man pondered over the matter for a while and then replied that he did not think so.

As nearly as he could remember his father met them at the dock where the Bridgeport boat landed, and they went to some hotel in the neighborhood of the water-front.

He was not certain about this though; it was only his impression, and he might be mistaken.

"But your father took up his quarters with you at the hotel?" the detective questioned, anxious for information upon this vital point.

"Oh, yes, he was absent during the day attending to his business, of course, but he came at night to supper regularly, I am certain about that."

"Well, then, if your father wasn't sharp enough to register under an assumed name, and I can succeed in finding the hotel, I shall be able to prove that your mother was his legal wife fast enough without having to hunt up the Connecticut records, although I will see what I can do in that line when I go to Bridgeport," the detective remarked, feeling that now he had something to go on.

"Oh, I don't think there was any doubt about my mother being legally married," the man remarked. "For when I had the interview with my father just before his death he did not say anything about the matter."

"He did not attempt to deny that I was his son, but he said there were reasons why he wished the matter to be kept quiet, and so he cautioned me not to speak about the affair to any one."

"And, of course, it was to your interest to be obliging," Joe Phenix remarked.

"Oh, yes, and I went away, quite contented, after arranging to call upon him in a couple of days, when he said he would be ready to make some provision for me."

"Then, like many another man I couldn't stand good fortune, and had to go and make a fool of myself," the man declared, with bitter accent.

"This gentleman explained the matter to me," Joe Phenix remarked.

"While I was in the hospital I heard some of the attendants speaking of the death of the rich brewer," young Shubaugh said.

"I had sense enough, you know, not to give my real name when I was carried to the hospital, so no one knew who I was, and I was able to inquire about the matter without exciting anybody's suspicion that I had any particular interest in the old brewer's death."

"Yes, I comprehend," the detective observed.

"And there, while I lay on the flat of my back in the hospital, unable to move, I heard the story of my father's sudden death and account of how all his property would go to his only son, Jacob."

"Well, now, that was pretty hard lines, and no mistake!" the sport observed in a sympathetic way.

"Still, there isn't any use of attempting to disguise the fact that you were the man to blame," the general continued.

"If you hadn't been unwise enough to make a donkey of yourself you would not have got into such a hole," Jingo added in conclusion.

"Ah, well, I have been doing that sort of thing all my life," the sick man responded in a sulky way.

"I have been unlucky, right from the start," he continued, with a melancholy shake of the head.

"Yes, a man is generally unlucky when he stacks up against a game where the odds are all against him," the sport remarked with a sly wink to the detective.

"But I ought to get something out of this thing though," the sick man remarked.

"There is a chance of course," Joe Phenix continued. "But the matter will have to be handled very carefully."

"I was thinking that it might not be a bad idea for me to go and see this young Jacob Shubaugh," the general observed.

"It would not do any hurt, I should judge," Joe Phenix remarked, after thinking over the matter for a moment.

"Of course, I don't know what kind of a fellow this young man is," the sport declared.

"If he is a decent sort of a chap, with a heart in his bosom, a clean, white man, when he finds out that his half-brother is sick, and without money, he may be induced to shell out a few dollars, for with a couple of millions on hand he would never mind the ducats."

"But I will not be satisfied with a few dollars!" the sick man exclaimed, angrily.

"All the estate ought to be mine by rights. I am the oldest son and it ought to have all come to me!"

"Oh, no!" the sport replied. "You are away off, you know, when you say that! This isn't England, you understand, and in this land of the free, and the home of the brave, the eldest son doesn't take everything and leave the rest to go to the devil."

"Well, I ought to have an equal share, anyway," the sick man growled.

"Ah, yes, now you are talking!" the general responded.

"Now you are putting in the solid chunks of wisdom!" he continued. "Half would do very well, but to my thinking, the odds are fully a hundred—if not a thousand to one, that you don't stand any chance of getting half."

"What do you think, Mr. Phenix?" he asked, turning to the detective.

"The lawyers say that possession is nine points of the law," Joe Phenix responded. "And as the legal gentlemen generally know what they are talking about it is safe to assume that it will be an extremely difficult matter to get a good share of the money which is now in possession of the brewer's son."

"And you would advise a compromise, every time?" the sport urged.

"Yes, unless the case of this gentleman turns out to be much stronger than appears to be possible just now," the detective replied.

"I reckon that if the man is willing to give up ten thousand solid dollars it would be better to accept than to fight," the sport remarked in his shrewd way.

"It certainly appears so at present," Joe Phenix assented.

The sick man grumbled at the idea, for he thought he ought to have fifty thousand at the least, then the interview came to an end, the sport and the detective taking their departures.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE BREWER'S HEIR.

WHEN the pair got into the street they stopped for a moment's conversation upon the doorstep.

"Do you suppose it would be wise for me to go right up and see what this young fellow thinks about the matter?" the general asked.

"Yes, that is my idea, for it is my notion that the quicker you find out what the other party is likely to do in regard to it, the better."

"That certainly seems to be reasonable," the sport observed.

"I will go down to Bridgeport, and hunt these witnesses up, and as I do not anticipate that it will take me very long, by the time I get back you will know just what this Jacob Shubaugh proposes to do, and we will be able to plan the campaign."

"It seems to me that this is about the right sort of thing," the sport assented, and then the pair parted.

General Jingo engaged a cab and had the man drive him out to the palace-like country residence of the old brewer's son.

The general was lucky enough to find the owner of the mansion at home, and so he sent in his card, and under the neatly printed name of George Jingo, he inscribed with pencil the words, "important business."

Young Jacob Shubaugh was in a small apartment on the first floor, which was dignified by the title of library, but although there were a few books in a case at one end of the room, yet the owner of the mansion used it chiefly as a smoking and lounging apartment.

When the servant ushered the general into the room Shubaugh was leaning back in an easy-chair with a lighted cigar in his fingers, studying the general's card with a puzzled air.

The servant merely opened the door, so that the visitor could pass in, and then immediately retired.

The young man looked up so that the newcomer could get a good view of his face and then as their eyes met, both grinned in recognition.

"Hello! your name is Jingo, is it?" young Shubaugh exclaimed.

"Yes, so I am called, and you are Jacob Shubaugh?"

"Exactly! Let me see, I haven't seen you since that night at the Coney Island Club when you succeeded in getting away with a hundred dollars of my money."

"That is correct," the general observed with a pleasant smile.

"Young men will be rash, you know," the veteran sport continued. "And when on the strength of a man making a good showing in the first round of a fight you were wild enough to be willing to bet a hundred to fifty on him I was just the chap to take you up."

"And you got away with the ducats, too; not that I cared for the money, but it isn't pleasant to be taken into camp so easily."

"Well, men will make mistakes of that kind," the sport observed, with the air of a philosopher.

"Sit down and make yourself comfortable!" the young man exclaimed.

"Thank you," and the old sport took a chair.

"Have a cigar?"

"I don't mind if I do."

Then after the veteran got his cigar lit, the other looked at him in an inquiring way, and said:

"Are you the General Jingo, whose name gets in the newspapers so often?"

"Yes, I'm General Jingo, the all-around sport," the other remarked, plainly, blowing out a huge cloud of smoke.

"I am something of a high-flyer myself," Shubaugh observed. "But, somehow, I never happened to run across you except that one time at the Coney Island clubhouse, and then I didn't know who you were."

"Well, if it was going to cost you a hundred ducats every time you came across me, it was, perhaps, just as well that you did not see me often," the general observed, with a chuckle.

"Ah, you are a funny fellow!" Shubaugh exclaimed.

"Yes, I crack a joke once in a while, when I feel in the humor, you understand."

"Do you know that I have often thought I would like to meet you?" the young man exclaimed, abruptly.

"Is that so?"

"Yes, particularly after I read in the newspapers of some smart little match-making trick of yours."

"Well, I believe I do manage to make a success of it once in a while," the veteran observed in a modest way.

"I should say so! As I told you, I am considerable of a high-roller, and although I have got plenty of money, the time hangs heavy on my hands once in a while."

"When my old dad died he left me a couple of million of dollars," Shubaugh added.

"You are pretty well fixed, then, I should say."

"I hav'n't any cause to complain, but as I said, I don't know what to do with myself sometimes, and I got the notion into my head that it might be a good idea for me to start a racing stable."

"Well, it would undoubtedly be a good thing for some other people—the men who sold you the horses, and the people engaged to take care of them for instance, but whether it would pan out well for you or not is a question," the veteran sport observed with a sly twinkle in his keen gray eyes.

"Oh, well, I am no fool, you know, if I have got plenty of money, and you can bet your life that I don't intend to let anybody rob me!" young Shubaugh declared.

"If you set up a racing stable without you are lucky enough to get an extra good man to take charge of it, the odds are big that you will be skinned from the start!" the general declared.

"That is it! that is the point!" the other exclaimed. "I know enough to comprehend that such will be the case, and the first thing I would do would be to get some man who is up to all kinds of tricks—a man like yourself for instance—to run the scheme for me."

"Well, in that case you would probably

get along all right, and be able to enjoy the pleasant satisfaction of knowing that you were robbed by one man instead of a dozen," the old sport remarked with a grin.

"Oh, well, I will be willing to risk that," the young man replied.

"I say, how would you like to try your hand at something of the kind?" he continued.

"I am at liberty to negotiate, but before we go into that subject, there is another one which I want to talk to you about."

"Ah, yes, I comprehend," the young man observed with a glance at the sport's card which he still retained in his hand.

"Upon your pasteboard here you state 'important business.'"

"Yes, it is important, but I am afraid that what I have to say will not be very welcome."

The young man looked surprised.

"Now you are going into riddles, and I never was good at that sort of thing," Shubaugh remarked in a languid way.

"Suppose you fire away and explain," he continued.

"All right, a few words will do that," the general replied.

"I called to see you as the representative of your half-brother, Lemuel Shubaugh."

"Ah, yes, the Bridgeport fellow," the young man remarked, not at all surprised or disturbed.

"Yes, he is from Bridgeport," the sport remarked, slowly.

The fact that Shubaugh knew about his half-brother, and was not unpleasantly affected when his name was mentioned, appeared to the old sport to be signs of evil omen.

"Well, what of the man?" the other asked, carelessly, when the general did not go on.

"He fancies, you know, that he ought to have a slice of your father's, and his father's, property," the general explained.

"That isn't unreasonable, and I do not wonder that he should think so, but as my old dad didn't see fit to make a will so as to arrange the matter in that way I don't see why I should bother my head about it," the young man remarked in the most matter-of-fact way.

"Well, while this may appear reasonable to you yet it does not to him," the general explained.

"Your father died suddenly, you know."

"Very, true! what of it?" the other demanded, impatiently.

"He had no time to make a will, even if he had desired so to do," the general explained.

"A good many men who firmly intend to make a will, so as to have their property disposed of according to their idea, keep putting it off until it is too late; death comes so sudden that there isn't time."

"That wasn't the case with my old dad. He did not want to make a will," the young man declared. "He was a superstitious old coot, any way, and he got the idea in his head that if he made a will he would be inviting death."

"Yes, I have heard of just such cases," the sport responded.

"He was satisfied to let the law take care of his property," the young man explained.

"He wanted me to have it, and everything is arranged just as he would have had it if he had made a will."

"Did you know that your father saw Lemuel a short time before his death and promised to do something for him?"

"No, I don't know anything about it," Shubaugh replied, shortly.

"The man says so."

"Well, it may be true, but it does not make any difference whether it is or not."

"But as this Lemuel is the eldest son it seems to me that he ought to have a share of the property," the sport argued.

"He hasn't got any legal claim!"

"No?"

"Not a mite; his mother was never legally married to my father."

"His mother was not your father's legal wife, eh?"

"That is the truth as you will discover if you make a careful examination," the young man replied, in a tone which seemed to say that he felt perfectly sure of his ground.

"Well, I am rather astonished at that," the veteran sport remarked, in a reflective way.

"Yes, I don't doubt it, for I do not suppose this Bridgeport man has any idea of the truth."

"No, I do not think he has," the general replied. "Or, if he does know it he is cunning enough to keep the matter to himself."

"Oh, I think the fellow is honest about the matter; he probably supposes that his mother's marriage was legal, but it wasn't."

"Well, I don't exactly understand [how things are]," the general remarked.

"Did you know my father?" the young man asked, abruptly.

"No, I never met him personally," the sport answered.

"He was a very peculiar man," the other observed in a reflective way. "Not at all like the common run of men, you understand."

The sport nodded assent.

"A man of great force of mind and having very many odd ideas," Shubaugh continued.

"If he had been poor he would undoubtedly have been a rabid socialist, full of the rights of man, and all that sort of thing."

"It is an odd circumstance, when you come to think of it, that the socialists, the men who want to divide everything up so all mankind will stand on a level, are always men who do not possess any thing to divide," the old sport observed, shrewdly.

"Of course, when a man gets any thing he isn't usually eager, as a rule, to divide with somebody else," the young fellow observed in a cynical way.

"Very true! it is only the men who haven't any thing to divide who are anxious for a general divvy."

"My father was a free-thinker—a regular infidel, in fact," the son explained. "I never knew him to go into a church in his life, and he scoffed at all religions."

"A kind of a holy terror of a man, eh?" the general suggested.

"Only in that respect. He was square enough when it came to business matters," the other explained. "His word was as good as his bond, and I do not believe he ever wronged a man out of a penny in his life, or took an unfair advantage of any one."

"I understand; he was only a little cranky on religious matters."

"Exactly! and he had some peculiar ideas about marriages. He didn't think that either church or state had any right to interfere any more than if it was a partnership."

"It was his notion that if two people choose to call themselves man and wife they had a right to do so, and neither one should be obliged to live with the other a moment longer than was agreeable to the party."

"Yes, it is all very well to talk in that way, but when a man goes in to make light of the marriage tie and to break up the sanctity of the home, he destroys the very foundation of civilized society," the veteran sport declared.

"Oh, yes, my father was a crank of the cranks!" the young man responded.

"There isn't any doubt about that, and, of course, you will comprehend that a man with such peculiar ideas was not likely to get married in the regular way."

"No, I presume not—not if he could get a woman weak and foolish enough to agree with his wild ideas," the sport remarked, sarcastically.

"Well, he managed to find two of them during his lifetime," the other remarked.

"When a young man he succeeded in persuading the Bridgeport woman that a simple agreement to live together as man and wife was as good as an elaborate ceremony, and then when he came to New York he found another woman who was willing to agree to that sort of thing."

"Well, a man going ahead on that plan could have all the wives he wanted, although if the law got after him he would be apt to

have a hot time of it," the general observed in a reflective way.

"There were some peculiar circumstances connected with his second union," the young man remarked.

"My mother was the young and childless wife of the old German who owned the brewery where my father worked," he explained.

"The boss brewer died, and my father saw that there was a fine chance for him to step into the business if he could succeed in persuading the widow into a common-law marriage—as one of these unions where there is no regular ceremony is called."

"Yes, I understand."

"She was satisfied to agree, and, really, in this State it doesn't make any difference, you know, for the law recognizes a contract of that kind to be just as binding as though a dozen priests, or ministers, or magistrates had a finger in the pie."

"Yes, I am aware of that fact," the sport replied.

"And that is the way my father happened to take his second wife, and by so doing he contrived to get together a fortune of a couple of millions of dollars."

"And if he hadn't taken the widow he could not have done it."

"Exactly."

"It was rather rough on the Bridgeport woman though," the general suggested.

"Oh, no, not at all!" the young man declared, immediately.

"My father supported her in a liberal manner, and as she was a quiet home-lady who minded her own business, a true type of the thrifty German housewife, she never even dreamed that her man had another wife here in New York."

"So your father practically had two wives at the same time."

"Yes, and neither one had the slightest idea of the existence of the other."

"The Bridgeport woman died about ten years ago, and my mother eight years later," the young man explained.

"About a year after my mother's death my father had a violent attack of sickness and was given up by the doctors; thinking that he was surely booked for the other world he confided to me the story of his life."

"The son of the Bridgeport woman had run away to sea, but my father had an idea that he would turn up some day, and as he had determined to leave me all his money he wanted me to promise to help my half-brother along if he needed any assistance."

"Ah, yes, I see, and under the circumstances you could afford to do that easily enough."

"Oh, yes, situated as I am I can spare a few dollars without feeling it."

"But I don't exactly understand," the veteran sport remarked, affecting to be perplexed.

"Don't understand what?" Shubaugh asked.

"Why, your father married the Bridgeport woman in just the same way that he did your mother, and as that marriage was years in advance of the other, why wasn't it legal if the last one was?"

"Because one marriage was in the State of Connecticut, and the other in New York. Connecticut does not recognize a common-law marriage of that kind as being legal, while New York does," the young man explained.

The reason why the old sport wanted to draw the young man out was to ascertain if he was posted in regard to this fine legal point.

"Ah, yes, I see."

"If the first marriage had taken place in this State, then the second wouldn't have amounted to anything, and if my father died without making a will, as he did, then my cake would have been all dough, for this Bridgeport fellow would have taken everything just as I did."

"Ah, yes, I comprehend," the veteran sport remarked, with a wise wag of the head.

He saw that the young man had no suspicion that his father had ever brought the Connecticut woman into the State and made open acknowledgment that she was his wife.

"I suppose you thought that you had struck a bonanza when you ran across this

CHAPTER XIV.

EXPLAINING THE SITUATION.

THE veteran sport was not surprised by this assertion for it was just what he expected to hear.

fellow, and he told you his story?" the young man remarked, with a smile.

"Well, yes, I must admit that it struck me that there might be a few dollars in the scheme," the general replied.

"All there is in it is what I choose to give!" the other declared.

"Yes, yes, I see."

"And if I should take the notion into my head to button up my pockets and say 'No, not a cent will you get out of me!' the man couldn't make a raise to save his soul."

"I comprehend."

"How is the fellow? pretty badly off?"

"Yes, sick and not long for this world, I think."

"I will stand a regular allowance for him, ten or fifteen dollars a week, but no more," the young man said with an air of determination.

"All right! I will report to him just what you say," the general said, rising.

"But if he is inclined to be ugly, you know, not a cent will he get out of me."

"I understand."

"After you have explained matters to him, come and see me again. I mean business in regard to this racing-stable."

"I will!" And then the sport departed.

CHAPTER XV.

ON THE TRACK.

WHEN Joe Phenix took hold of a case it was his habit to get to work as promptly as possible, and so after making up his mind to go to Bridgeport he took the first train to that city which he could catch.

Doctor Robert Johnson was the name of the physician whom he desired to see.

This was the family doctor of the brewer's Connecticut wife, the man who had assisted at Lemuel Shubaugh's introduction into the world, and the most important witness to his identity.

The sick man had given the detective instructions so he could go straight to the house of the doctor, and as it was only a mile from the depot Joe Phenix was not long in reaching it.

As he turned the corner of the street the tin sign by the side of the door of one of the houses in the middle of the block caught his eyes.

"That is the doctor's sign, probably," Joe Phenix murmured. "So I will not have any difficulty in finding the house."

Shubaugh did not remember the doctor's number, but had described the location of the house so that, as he said, the detective would not have any difficulty in finding it.

But when Joe Phenix came within reading distance of the sign he found that a disappointment awaited him.

The house was occupied by a doctor, but the sign stated that his name was David Z. Smith.

As the detective stopped and studied the sign, then cast his eyes around for the purpose of seeing if there was another doctor's "shingle" in the neighborhood, a policeman came along.

He was a middle-aged man, with an intelligent face, and the idea came to Joe Phenix that it might be possible to procure some information from him, so as the policeman approached he accosted him.

"I am looking for Doctor Robert Johnson," Joe Phenix said. "Can you give me any information regarding him?"

"Oh, yes," the man replied, immediately. "As it happens I live right around the corner in the next street and so am well acquainted in the neighborhood."

"It is lucky for me that I spoke to you then."

"Yes, I have known the doctor for over thirty years."

"You must be well acquainted with him," the detective remarked.

"Oh, yes, I know the doctor about as well as anybody does. Did you just want to see him as a doctor, or have you private business with him?" And he added, abruptly:

"You mustn't think that I am trying to pry into your business, you know, but if you want to see Johnson for anything in particular I may be able to give you information about him; but if you only want a doctor, this other man, Smith, maybe, will do."

"No, I am not in search of medical ad-

vice, but want to see Johnson in order to get some information from him in regard to a business matter in which I am interested."

The policeman shook his head.

"I don't think you will be able to find the doctor," he remarked.

"Has he gone away?"

"Yes, and no one knows where he has gone either, I reckon."

"How is that?"

"He got in trouble," the policeman exclaimed. "He always was a cranky sort of a fellow, although a pretty good doctor, and at one time he had an excellent practice, but during the last ten years he got to moving around with a lot of these crazy fellows who are going to upset things generally, and, between you and me and the bed-post, it is my opinion that the doctor has not been quite right in his head for a number of years."

"It is a strange case."

"Yes, he isn't crazy enough to put into a lunatic asylum, you understand?"

"I comprehend—just a crank."

"Exactly! Well, he has been gradually losing his practice, and for the last year or so, almost all the good people deserted him, and he had a mighty poor class of patients."

"Such a result would follow, of course, under the circumstances."

"Then he got in trouble with an Irishman, the man broke his leg and the doctor set it, but through some carelessness of the man or doctor—more likely the man was to blame than the doctor, I reckon, for he was a quarrelsome, reckless, drinking fellow, the leg was crooked, so the man will have to limp all the rest of his days."

"The fellow swore that it was all the doctor's fault, of course, and he not only wouldn't pay the bill, but vowed he would kill Johnson if he had to hang for it!"

"A bloodthirsty scoundrel!"

"The doctor was never noted for his courage, and as, I suppose, he really believed the Irishman might attempt to kill him he considered it best for him to go away."

"And I presume that on account of the Irishman's threats he did not allow anybody to know where he went," the detective remarked.

"Yes, I suppose that was the reason. One thing is certain, no one in this neighborhood knows where he went, and he slipped away between two days, as the saying is, and nobody knew that he was going until after he had gone."

"In fact, the first intimation the neighborhood had that he was among the missing was when this Doctor Smith took possession of the house, tore down Johnson's sign and put up his own," the policeman continued.

"Then, when he was questioned, this Doctor Smith said he had bought out the other doctor's practice, and also purchased his lease and furniture."

"Do you think it is probable that Doctor Smith knows where Johnson has gone?" Joe Phenix asked.

"I have always understood that he pretended that he didn't know anything about it," the policeman replied.

"Of course, Johnson's abrupt departure caused considerable talk, not that he owed anybody anything, for he did not, as he made it a rule to always pay cash for everything he got so he didn't have any creditors—it was the general opinion too among those who knew him that the doctor was pretty well off—but, naturally, when a well-known man got out in such an unceremonious way people would be apt to wonder and talk about it."

"Oh, yes, it would be very strange if they did not."

"When they asked Smith about the matter he said that he really didn't know, for Johnson had not told him where he was going, but it was his impression from some remarks that Johnson made that he intended to go to England."

"That was probably a device of the doctor to throw the Irishman off the track," the detective remarked.

"Yes, that is what people thought around here," the policeman observed.

"I think I will have to see this Doctor Smith for I am anxious to find Johnson," Joe Phenix said in a thoughtful way.

"Well, now, I can give you a pointer about Smith," the good-natured policeman

remarked, lowering his voice to a cautious tone, and casting a glance around as if he was anxious to be sure that there was no eavesdropper in the neighborhood.

"I will be very much obliged to you for any information."

"This Smith is a mean sort of an old skin-flint and you will have to handle him very gingerly to be able to get anything out of him."

"He is one of the kind of men who are chasing the almighty dollar so hard that it is as much as he can do to take time to breathe."

"Ah, yes, I understand," the detective replied with a significant nod.

"If he has got any information which he thinks will be valuable to you he will be sartin' to try for to get a stake out of you," the policeman declared.

"Well, I don't know as I would be willing to pay much for the information," Joe Phenix observed.

"He will try to get something out of you if he can, for that is just the sort of fellow he is."

"I am very much obliged to you for your warning, for now I will be on my guard," the detective remarked.

"Will I be likely to find the doctor in now?"

"No, for I met him going down the street about half an hour ago, but he is likely to come back at any time, and if I were you I would go in and wait for him."

The detective said he would do so, and after again thanking the friendly policeman for his advice, rung the doctor's bell.

A sour-faced, middle-aged woman answered the summons, and when the man-hunter explained that he wished to see the doctor, ushered him into the physician's reception room, saying that she expected the doctor to return at any moment.

The detective did not have long to wait for within ten minutes the doctor made his appearance.

He was a tall, thin man, with a face which bore a strange resemblance to the countenance of a fox, and even if the detective had not been warned by the policeman as to what manner of man he was, his own natural acuteness would have set the doctor down as being one of the mean, grasping fellows with whom it is so unpleasant to have dealings.

The detective came at once to the point.

"I have called upon you, doctor, to see if I could find out where Doctor Johnson resides."

A peculiar cunning expression appeared on the face of the physician as he helped himself to a chair.

Then he caressed his chin with his hand, cast a sideways glance at the visitor, and said, slowly:

"Ah, um, I don't really know as I can give you any particular information in regard to Doctor Johnson."

"I am sorry to hear that, for I had an idea that you might give me a clue to his whereabouts."

"Doctor Johnson is a man whom I esteem very highly," the other remarked in an owl like way. "And I wouldn't for the world do anything to cause him any trouble."

"You are laboring under a misapprehension, if you imagine that I wish to trouble the doctor in any way," Joe Phenix hastened to explain. "On the contrary, if I can succeed in finding the doctor I may be able to put a few dollars in his way."

Immediately the word dollars was uttered the doctor pricked up his ears, figuratively speaking.

"Really, is that possible?" he inquired, his interest enlisted at once.

"Yes, provided the doctor can give certain information which is wanted."

"Information, eh?"

"Yes; I represent a legal gentleman in New York who is engaged in a law case, and he has an idea that the doctor can give some information which may prove to be valuable, but nothing certain can be ascertained about the matter until the doctor is seen and interviewed."

"Ah, yes, I understand," the other remarked, in a reflective way. "And is it the impression of your principal that the doctor may turn out to be a valuable witness?" the doctor continued in an insinuating way.

"No, not a particularly valuable witness, but if he can give testimony in regard to a certain point it will strengthen the case."

"Yes, yes, I comprehend," the doctor remarked, and as he spoke he was apparently cogitating over something.

"I inquired in the neighborhood, but no one seems to know where the doctor has gone."

"There was a reason why Doctor Johnson should desire to keep his whereabouts a secret," the doctor explained.

"Yes, I heard the story of the Irishman," the detective remarked. "And I wonder that the doctor should have paid any attention to the threats, for such men are rarely dangerous."

"Doctor Johnson was a very peculiar man, and any one who attempted to judge him by the rules which apply to the common run of humanity would make a great mistake."

"Yes, so I understand."

"I have made it a rule, when any one inquired of me in regard to the doctor, to reply that I could not give any information," the doctor remarked with a foxy smile.

"The idea being that you did not want to give any?"

"Yes, partly so, and then, really, the doctor did not leave his address with me."

"I comprehend. You could not say the doctor told you his address, but for all that you could make a shrewd guess as to where he was."

"Yes, owing to a mere accident, for the doctor did not tell me where he was going, nor did I ask him, for it wasn't any of my business."

"Of course not."

"If I can give you information of the doctor, so you will be able to find him, it will be of considerable value to you, I presume," the doctor remarked in an insinuating way.

"Well, no, to be honest with you, the information will not be of much value," Joe Phenix replied, with the idea of showing the doctor that he could not make any great "strike."

"Oh, you think not?" the old fellow exclaimed, evidently disappointed.

"I am certain of it, for by advertising in the personal columns of the leading newspapers, we can undoubtedly reach the doctor," Joe Phenix explained.

"The chances are great that he is right in New York City, for it is the most natural thing in the world for a man like the doctor to come to a metropolis like New York when he wants to hide."

While he spoke the acute detective had kept a close watch on the face of the old man, and although the doctor strove to prevent his features from betraying the thoughts that were in his mind, yet he was not a sufficiently good dissembler to prevent the detective from seeing that his shot in regard to the doctor being in New York had struck home.

"Well, of course, you legal gentlemen understand business of that kind much better than I do, for it is altogether out of my line," the old fellow remarked in his smooth, oily way.

"No doubt you stand a chance of reaching the doctor in time, but it will cost you some money, while you are willing to pay me for a bit of information I could put you on the track at once."

"Well, there is certainly reason in what you say, and I might stand a five-dollar note," the detective observed, slowly.

"Say ten, my dear, sir, and it is a bargain!" the old fellow exclaimed, persuasively.

"Oho! that is doubling my figure!" Joe Phenix replied.

"Really it is worth it when you consider that you will not have any trouble in finding your man, but you can go directly to his residence."

"Well, it is a bargain, but the information must be correct," the detective stipulated.

"Oh, certainly, of course, that is understood," the old fellow replied.

"This information I gained just by accident, the doctor explained. "For Johnson did not intend to allow any one to know where he went, and he changed his name so that he could not be followed, but for some reason he wrote his address, and then used a blotter to dry the ink. The blotter was a

new one, I found in among the waste papers, and by holding it to the glass in this way was able to read the writing."

As he spoke the old fellow took the blotter from his desk and held it up before the glass, while Joe Phenix looked on with a deal of interest.

CHAPTER XVI.

A SURPRISE.

THE reversed writing upon the blotter could be easily read as it came out clear and distinct on the glass, and great was Joe Phenix's surprise when he saw the name.

It was:

"DR. TOBIAS HUNNAWALT."

This was so entirely unexpected that it was no wonder that the detective's astonishment was great, and after the name came the residence.

The man he was in search of then, Doctor Robert Johnson, of Bridgeport, was the quaint old fellow who lived in the lonely mansion on the Kingsbridge road.

"You seemed surprised?" the doctor remarked.

"Yes, I am, for this Doctor Hunnawalt is an old acquaintance of mine, and I had no idea that he was the Doctor Johnson who was wanted."

"There isn't any doubt that he is for he told me that in order to avoid the pursuit of the Irishman he was going to take a false name; and then the doctor too had got mixed up with a lot of visionary men, who called themselves reformers, and it is the fashion of such fellows to adopt odd or high-sounding names, and I suppose that is where Johnson got the idea of changing his appellation."

"Very probably, but I fancy that about all the reforming that any of the men will do will be to reform the doctor's cash from his pockets into their own," the detective remarked.

"Very likely."

Then Joe Phenix paid the old fellow and took his departure.

There were three other men to see, witnesses who could prove that Lemuel Shubaugh was the son of the great New York brewer, Jacob Shubaugh, and Joe Phenix was lucky enough to find two out of the three.

The third man was in Europe, on a visit to his German fatherland.

All three of the men were foreigners, two of them Bohemians, who had come from the same town as old Jacob Shubaugh, and the third a German who had learned his trade in the same brewery in the old country where Shubaugh had worked.

The men knew all about the father and son, and declared they were quite willing to go on the witness-stand in order to tell what they knew, for they did not bear the dead man any love, as after his rise to fortune in New York, he was not disposed to be on friendly terms with the men who had been his boon companions during his days of poverty.

They told the same story too in regard to the brewer's peculiar notions about the marriage tie that the son had related, so it was plain the young man had spoken the truth.

The detective thanked the pair for their willingness to aid him and then departed.

Having accomplished all he came to do in Bridgeport, he took the first train to New York.

"Now, then, I must have an interview with this doctor, and see what he has to say for himself," Joe Phenix remarked, as the iron horse sped on his way.

CHAPTER XVII.

PUTTING THE DOCTOR ON THE RACK.

JOE PHENIX was one of the men who believed in making hay while the sun shone, and when he once got on a track, followed it up until he ran his game down, so as soon as he arrived in New York he took a cab and proceeded immediately to the lonely mansion beyond the Harlem River.

As the detective drove up to the house he looked searchingly around for the purpose of discovering if he could see anything of the newsboy, Swipsey, whom he had instructed to keep a close watch on the house.

But he could not catch sight of the boy; this did not disturb the man-hunter though, for it was his idea that the lad, being an unusually sharp fellow, had found some secure hiding-place from whence he could keep a close watch on the house without being observed.

The detective had instructed him to keep out of sight as much as possible, for if the inmates of the house got an idea that some one was playing the spy upon them they would be on their guard, and so take measures to prevent the watcher from learning anything of importance.

When Joe Phenix rung the door-bell of the mansion it was the old doctor who answered the summons.

He recognized the detective immediately, and it was plain from the expression which appeared on his face that he was not pleased by the prospect of another interview with him.

"Well, sir, what can I do for you to-day?" the doctor remarked in a very chilling way before the detective could speak.

"I have come to see you on a little business matter."

"I can assure you, sir, that I know nothing at all about the man whom you asserted took refuge in my grounds after assaulting you!" the old gentleman exclaimed. "I took pains, with my servants, to make a careful survey of the place the next day and we were not able to discover any indications that a stranger had taken refuge in the grounds."

"You have made a mistake; I have not come to speak in reference to that matter," the detective explained.

"Ah, indeed?" and the doctor appeared surprised.

"Yes, I wish to converse with you upon another subject altogether, and I can assure you that it is an important one or else I should not trouble you," Joe Phenix explained, and he spoke with the air of a man who meant what he said.

The manner of the detective, more than his words, made an impression on the old gentleman, and so he invited him to walk into the sitting room, which was a large, plainly-furnished apartment on the first floor to the right of the hall.

After entering the room the doctor begged the detective to be seated, took a chair himself, and then looked inquiringly at his visitor.

Joe Phenix had taken the precaution to close the door after him, as he followed the doctor into the apartment, and now he took a look around, remarking as he did so:

"This matter in regard to which I am about to speak is rather an important one to you, and so I am going to take the liberty of asking if there is any danger of our conversation being overheard?"

A look of surprise appeared on the face of the doctor.

"Well, no, I don't think there is any likelihood of our words being overheard," the old gentleman remarked, slowly.

"I can speak freely then?"

"Yes, I think so."

"I have just come from Bridgeport," the detective remarked, in his quiet way.

The doctor was not a man who possessed much control over himself and so he started in surprise.

"From Bridgeport!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, and I went there on purpose to see Doctor Robert Johnson."

The old gentleman was so surprised that he could only stare in astonishment.

"But I did not find the doctor and so only had my journey for my pains, as far as he was concerned," the detective continued.

"At the time that I saw you I did not know who you really were, or else I should not have been obliged to travel all the way to Bridgeport after you."

The old gentleman became a trifle nervous.

"Really, sir, I am afraid that I do not understand you."

"I will speak more plainly then; the reason I did not find you, Doctor Johnson, in Bridgeport was because you were here in New York."

"There is some mistake!" the old gentleman exclaimed in a very nervous way. "It is true that I am a doctor, but my name is Hunnawalt—Doctor Tobias Hunnawalt."

"Oh, yes, I understand all about that," Joe Phenix remarked with a meaning smile.

"I know why you changed your name after leaving Bridgeport. You were afraid of being followed by the Irishman who had threatened you, but you need not have any fear on that score as far as I am concerned, for I have nothing to do with the Irishman, and, in fact, I do not think you need to borrow trouble on his account, for it is my impression that if you succeed in living until he cuts your thread in twain the chances are good that you will be booked for a ripe old age."

"Yes, yes," said the doctor in confusion, evidently very much perplexed.

"No, sir, I have nothing to do with the Irishman, but my object in hunting you up was to get some information about Mr. Lemuel Shubaugh."

The under jaw of the old gentleman dropped and he stared at the detective in amazement.

"Lemuel Shubaugh—information about Lemuel Shubaugh?" he managed to stammer after a pause.

"Yes, sir, that is what I am after," the detective replied in his straight-forward, business-like way.

"Well, really, I am quite taken by surprise," the doctor remarked, evidently trying to "pull himself together," as the saying is.

"You did not expect to be questioned in regard to that matter, eh?" the detective remarked in a cheerful way, smiling blandly at the physician who appeared to be very much out of sorts.

"The question is certainly an entirely unexpected one," the doctor remarked, slowly.

"Certain legal questions have come up in regard to this Lemuel Shubaugh, and it was thought likely that as you were acquainted with all the particulars of his birth, and early life, you would be the proper person to give information about him."

For a few moments the doctor hesitated, and his brow was wrinkled by the dark lines of thought, and then, with a foxy smile, he asked:

"Pray may I inquire why any one should take an interest in the affairs of this person whom you mention?"

"Circumstances have arisen so that the gentleman is desirous of proving himself to be the son of the late Jacob Shubaugh, the well-known brewer of this city."

"Ah, yes, I see," the doctor remarked, in a reflective way.

"And is it admissible to ask why does the party want to prove that he is the son of the brewer?" he continued, in an insinuating way.

"You will have to see my principal—the man who has employed me to look into the matter—in order to get an answer to that question," the detective replied.

"Ah, yes, I understand," and the doctor looked wise as he spoke.

"I am only an agent, you know, employed to make certain examinations, and, of course, it is not to be supposed that I would be intrusted with all the particulars of the business."

"Very true, very true," the doctor observed, slowly, but there was an expression on his face which indicated that he was not satisfied with the explanation.

"You were the family physician of Mrs. Jacob Shubaugh, I believe," Joe Phenix said.

"Well, I don't know as I could be termed her family doctor, but the lady was my patient on several occasions."

"You were present at the birth of her son, Lemuel?" the detective questioned.

A blank expression appeared on the face of the doctor, then he shook his head and appeared as though he was trying to recall the past.

"Really, I am afraid that you have put a question to me which is in the nature of a conundrum," he observed, after quite a long pause.

"It must be a good many years since that event took place, and my memory is not as good as it used to be," he continued. "When it comes to recalling things which happened twenty or thirty years ago I find, to my sorrow, that my memory is sometimes very poor indeed."

The detective thought that he understood why the doctor's memory was a little hazy in regard to this matter.

He had got the idea into his head that there was some money in the affair, and he wanted a share of the spoils, so Joe Phenix came right to the point.

"Of course you understand, doctor, that if you are able to give testimony as to the birth of Lemuel Shubaugh, so that, backed by your evidence, and also the evidence of some other parties, who are familiar with his childhood, Lemuel Shubaugh will be able to go into a court of law and prove to the satisfaction of a judge and jury that he is the son of the old brewer, all concerned in the matter will be well paid, and as you will be the chief witness you can depend upon receiving a handsome amount if the young man succeeds in accomplishing what he has set out to do."

"Have you any idea in regard to his object?" the old fellow asked in an insinuating way.

"My principal will be able to explain all about the matter to you, and I have no doubt he will be glad to do it if you can see your way clear to giving the testimony which is desired from you in regard to the birth of this Lemuel."

"By the way, how is the young man?" the doctor asked, abruptly.

"The last time I saw him, a year or so ago, he did not seem as if he was long for this world."

"His health is not good," Joe Phenix replied, somewhat puzzled to account for the doctor's interest in the matter. "But it is likely that he will last for some time yet."

"I am glad to hear it, but I am somewhat surprised, for he looked very badly."

"Well, doctor, will you think this matter over, and see if you can refresh your memory?" the detective asked.

"Oh, yes, certainly; but, really, I am afraid it would only be holding out false hopes, for I feel pretty certain that my memory is so bad in regard to events which happened thirty odd years ago that if I was to be put on a witness stand I would be sure to turn out to be an exceedingly poor witness."

And the doctor shook his head in a melancholy way when he concluded the speech, just as if he deeply regretted being obliged to make such a confession.

Joe Phenix for once in his life was completely puzzled.

He could not account for this strange action on the part of the old doctor.

Of course, he was completely satisfied that the man was not telling the truth when he declared he did not remember the particulars concerning the birth of Lemuel Shubaugh.

But what was his motive for descending to this falsehood?

What could he hope to gain by throwing obstacles in the way of the young man?

Could it be possible that he and young Jacob Shubaugh had come to an understanding?

Had he sought out the brewer's son, told him what testimony he could give in regard to his half-brother, and had Jacob bought him off?

This was the only theory that the acute detective could think of at the moment, but he was by no means satisfied that it was correct.

In the first place young Jacob felt so secure in his possession of the property that it was almost certain that he would not be willing to pay anybody any large sum of money to desert Lemuel's side.

And as far as the question of money went, it was certain that Lemuel could afford to pay much more to his aids than the other would be disposed to offer.

It was certainly a most mysterious affair, and the more Joe Phenix reflected upon it, the more puzzled he became.

It must be admitted that, notwithstanding the acuteness of the experienced man-hunter, the old doctor had decidedly the best of the situation.

But in order to completely satisfy himself that the doctor's inability to give testimony was because he did not want to, not because he was not able, the detective resolved to pursue the matter a little further.

"It is very unfortunate that you should

be afflicted with so bad a memory," Joe Phenix remarked.

"Yes, but I am getting old, and with the creeping on of age such a thing must be expected," the doctor remarked with an air of patient resignation.

"But I should think that you would have books to which you could refer which in a case of this kind would enable you to recall all the particulars," Joe Phenix remarked.

For a moment the doctor appeared as though he was rather at a loss how to reply, and then he hummed and hawed a bit and remarked:

"Ah, well, yes, I certainly used to keep books, and if I had them now I might be able to refresh my memory so as to be able to tell something about this matter, but when I left Bridgeport, and made up my mind to retire from the practice of my profession, I threw away the books, and at the present moment I have no idea where they are, but I think it is very possible that they were destroyed."

This time the detective was sure that the doctor was not telling the truth, but was still in the dark as to why the old fellow should adopt such a course.

"I don't suppose it is possible for you to put me on the track of the books?" asked the detective.

"No, sir, indeed it is not!" the doctor replied, promptly.

"It is my impression that they were burnt up," the old fellow continued.

"I think I can recall that when I threw the books out with a lot of rubbish I told my servant that they had better be burnt up, and I feel quite positive that they were cremated."

"I am sorry that you can't give any information about the matter," the detective said as he rose to go. "But here is my address," and he penciled on a card Tony Western's name and address.

"If anything should turn up, advise me."

The doctor said he would and Joe Phenix departed.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE OLD GERMAN.

ON re-entering the cab Joe Phenix directed the driver to proceed to the nearest station of the Third Avenue Elevated Road, it being his purpose to take a down-town train in order to economize time.

Although he could not help admitting that he had made a complete failure in his attempt to get information out of the old doctor, yet the indefatigable man-hunter proceeded on his way with just as much energy as though he had achieved a complete success.

Although in the dark as to the doctor's motive in denying that he could give any information of value in regard to Lemuel Shubaugh, yet Joe Phenix was satisfied that the doctor could give valuable testimony if he chose so to do.

"There is some strong motive in the background," the detective mused as the cab rolled on its way.

"And I cannot bring myself to believe that young Jacob has anything to do with the matter."

"He is in possession of the estate and feels too secure to waste money by buying off any man of the doctor's caliber."

"Here is a fine field for an investigation, and as soon as I get through with this matter that I am now on I will give my earnest attention to the doctor's case."

When the detective arrived at the L. station he paid the cabman and dismissed him. Then he took the train for down-town and rode in it until he arrived at Franklin Square station where he got out.

The bloodhound now proposed to make an examination of all the hotels in the neighborhood of the Bridgeport boat landing.

"Not exactly the quarter that an English-speaking husband would select to find accommodations for his wife," the detective remarked as he stood with his back to the entrance of the dock where the Bridgeport boats landed, and surveyed the surrounding neighborhood.

"But it must be remembered that this was twenty-five or thirty years, Shubaugh did not have much money in those days, and then too he may have been actuated by a desire to keep his wife in the background,

so that no one would know that he was married.

"According to the story that they tell, the original owner of the brewery was an old and sickly man, and it is possible that even at that time Shubaugh had an idea that in the event of the old fellow's death he stood a good chance of marrying the widow and so getting possession of the valuable business.

"Another point, too: these Germans, Bohemians and such like are a clannish people, and like to deal with their countrymen, and if there is an old-style German house in this neighborhood the chances are great that Shubaugh would have been apt to have taken his wife there.

"But, in a city like New York though, where so many changes take place in a year, it is expecting a great deal to look to finding a common German house which has been in the same location, and run by the same landlord, for over thirty years."

And while the detective had been speaking his eyes had been searching the neighborhood.

There were plenty of saloons around, a number of them with a hotel annex, and as the man-hunter carefully examined the signs his eyes fell upon one which looked promising.

The sign read:

"HOTEL HUFFMAN."

And it was dingy and discolored as though it had been exposed to the influence of the elements for many a long year.

The building to which it was affixed was a dingy two-story and a half brick, and from the looks of the house it was plain that it was an extremely "old settler."

"That will do for a commencement," Joe Phenix remarked, as he crossed the street and headed for the saloon.

The saloon was as fully old-fashioned inside as out.

When the detective entered there were only a couple of customers at the bar, behind which a stolid-looking German boy was presiding.

Joe Phenix called for a glass of beer, and after the boy brought it, asked in a careless way if Mr. Huffman was about.

"There he is at the table," the boy answered directing the detective's attention to a portly old man with snow-white hair and a long beard who sat at a table at the further end of the room, engaged in reading a newspaper.

Joe Phenix took his glass of beer, went up to the table and helped himself to a chair.

The host looked up from his newspaper.

"How do you do, Mr. Huffman?" said the detective with the air of an old acquaintance.

"Will you have a glass of beer with me?"

The host, who spoke good English with only a slight accent, thanked the new-comer for his offer, and said he wouldn't mind.

The beer was brought and the pair pledged each other.

Then the old German who had been making an inspection of the detective said:

"Your face seems to be familiar to me but I can't call you by name."

"I don't wonder at that for it is a good twenty-five years—yes, maybe thirty, since I was in your place," the detective replied.

"Is that so?" the landlord exclaimed with a deal of interest.

"Yes, Jacob Shubaugh and I were in here together," Joe Phenix continued. "You remember Jake Shubaugh of course?"

"Oh, yes!"

"That was before he made his money in the brewery."

"Ah, yes, I remember."

"I was only a youngster at the time, and I used to live at Bridgeport in the same street with Jake's wife. You remember her?" and the detective put the question as though he was perfectly sure of a favorable answer.

"Oh, yes, I remember her—she was a nice woman," the old German said in his placid way.

"My wife used to think a great deal of her."

"Let me see, she always used to stop with you when she came to the city, did she not?" Joe Phenix asked.

"Well, yes, she has been here six or eight

times, maybe," the old German replied in a reflective way.

"I shall never forget how astonished my wife was the first time that Jake Shubaugh spoke about his wife," the old fellow continued.

"When Jake first came to New York he boarded with us, and we had no idea that he was a married man, but then he was a fellow who never said much about his own affairs, then one day he said, 'My wife is coming from Bridgeport to-morrow to do some shopping in New York. Would you mind if she stopped here with me while she stays in town for two or three days?'"

"Ah, yes, I see," remarked the detective very much interested in the recital, for he saw what valuable witnesses the old German and his wife would prove.

"My wife took a few boarders but she did not like women in the house, and she never took them, but as she liked Jake—he was a good fellow—and it was not like taking a regular woman boarder, she said that his wife might come."

"That was natural under the circumstances," the detective observed.

"Now, how long ago was this? Do you remember? Over thirty years I should think, eh?" Joe Phenix suggested.

"Just thirty-two years ago this month," the old fellow replied immediately, and speaking with the positive air of a man who was certain about the matter.

"How comes it that you are able to fix the time so exactly?"

"I will tell you, my friend. Jake brought his wife on the very day that I bought this house, and my wife and I gave a little wine supper to our friends to celebrate the event, and both Jake and his wife were present."

"Ah, yes, I see. An affair of that kind helps to make one certain about a date."

"Oh, yes, and then too our eldest girl, Gertrude, was just a year old on that date, and I remember that Mrs. Shubaugh had her boy here with her, and he was about a year older, so we had a fine joke of how we would marry the two when they grew up."

"But I say how come it that Jake married the brewer's widow when he had this wife already?" the detective asked.

"Ah, my dear friend, I do not know how that was," the old man replied with a grave shake of the head.

"My wife and I often talked the matter over."

"You see Jake did not come here any more, and we never heard anything about his wife, so we came to the conclusion that she must be dead."

"Oh, no, she was alive at the time of his second marriage, and only died a few years ago."

"Ah, well, Jake came in for a good thing when he married the brewer's widow, and maybe he arranged with his other wife so that she would not trouble him."

"She was a very nice, quiet little woman, and as she seemed to think a good deal of Jake, maybe she was content to let him take another wife as long as he was going to make plenty of money by so doing."

"Well, I have heard of women who were self-denying enough to do a thing of that kind, but they are few and far between," Joe Phenix remarked.

Having succeeded in obtaining the information which he desired he took leave of the good-natured old German and departed.

The detective was very much pleased at his success.

"I have managed to make out a good clear case," he soliloquized.

"Jacob Shubaugh lived with the Bridgeport woman in this city, and publicly introduced her as his wife, and at a time too when his second wife belonged to another man, so the first wife is the legal one, and the other is not."

CHAPTER XIX.

MORE INFORMATION.

THE detective proceeded to General Jingo's apartments where he found the veteran sport in attendance on the sick man, who seemed to be extremely weak, but under the influence of the good news brought by the man-hunter he picked up a little.

"You must hold on tight to life, my dear fellow!" the sport exclaimed.

"Oh, yes, you can depend upon my doing my best, but I have had a tough time of it, and once in a while the thought will come to me that I am not long for this world," Lemuel Shubaugh remarked.

"Ah, come now! it will never do to talk in that way; you must brace up and have some style about you!" the general exclaimed. "Why, you have got the clearest kind of a case, and when the evidence is once produced in a law court it will be seen that the other party hasn't got a leg to stand on!" the sport continued.

"The evidence is certainly very clear," Joe Phenix observed.

"I do not think there is much doubt that the first wife knew of the second union, and for the sake of her husband's prosperity was content not to make any trouble," the detective continued.

"Or it may be that Shubaugh managed to persuade her that his marriage with her was not a legal one, and so she did not dare to attempt to make any disturbance when he married the brewer's widow."

"The man never calculated, though, that that moment he brought the woman to New York and introduced her as his wife, by the act he married himself as securely to her as though he had had a dozen parsons to tie the knot," the general observed.

"The property is all mine, then, and this Jacob Shubaugh is not entitled to anything!" the sick man cried, in a savage sort of way.

"Oh, yes, you have undoubtedly got the dead wood on him," Jingo replied.

"Yes, it is all mine!" the sufferer cried in hoarse exultation.

The general looked at the speaker for a moment, and a slight expression of disgust appeared on his face.

"Well, it is yours when you get it," the veteran sport observed. "But you can just bet your sweet life that you will have the toughest kind of a fight!"

"Oh, no, when this usurper sees how strong a case I have he will be apt to give in," the sick man declared in a confident way.

"Oh, no!" the general exclaimed. "Don't you make any mistake about that!"

"From what I have seen of the man I am satisfied that he will make an awful ugly fight," the veteran sport continued.

"Ah, what does it matter, we will beat him in the long run!" Shubaugh declared with the most magnificent confidence.

"Oh, yes, but it will take a heap of money to carry on a contest of this kind," the sport remarked.

"Now would it not be better to arrange a compromise with your half-brother?"

"No, no, no compromise!" the sick man declared, angrily.

"I want what is mine, and I am going to have it too!" he added in an extremely ugly way.

"Now, my dear fellow, will you listen to reason?" the veteran sport remarked in a soothing tone as one might speak to a refractory child.

"No, I don't want to hear anything about reason!" the sick man retorted. "I want my money, and I am going to have it too!"

"Old fellow, you must take into consideration that this man is your half-brother," Jingo urged.

"What of it?" the other growled. "What do I care for that? What did he ever do for me?"

"What could he do for you when you never went anywhere near him so as to give the man a chance?"

"He knew that I was in existence, and he never took the trouble to hunt me up," Shubaugh complained.

"Ah, come now! for heaven's sake, man, be reasonable!" the veteran sport exclaimed, impatiently.

"Well, ain't I reasonable?" the sick man asked in a sulky way.

"No you are not when you talk in any such fashion as that," the general retorted.

"Your half-brother knew that there was such a man in existence as yourself, for your father told him so, and commended you to his care, but you must remember that you were a sailor, leading a wandering life, and no one knew where you were; fact, it was an even bet that you were dead long ago as

far as any one knew. How then could he do any thing for you?"

"Well, he certainly didn't try!" Shubaugh argued.

"He acted as ninety-nine men out of a hundred would have acted under the circumstances," the sport declared.

"It was not his business to go and hunt you up," Jingo continued. "Particularly as it would have puzzled the smartest kind of a man to decide how to go to work to get on your track.

"It was the most natural thing in the world for him to assume that if you needed help you would come and ask for it, as it would be no trouble for you to find him."

"I did not want any of his money!" the sick man retorted. "I wasn't going around asking charity!"

"You are inclined to be ugly about this matter," the sport declared.

"Now see how the man behaved when I waited on him to have a talk about your business," the general continued.

"Well, I don't see that he was willing to do much for me!" Shubaugh exclaimed.

"I don't agree with you in regard to that," the general rejoined.

"He was willing to give you a regular amount, payable weekly, for the rest of your life."

"A paltry sum of fifteen or twenty dollars, wasn't it?" the sick man remarked in supreme contempt.

"He would probably have been willing to make it twenty-five or thirty if you had had a personal interview with him, and talked to the man in the right way."

"Ah, yes, perhaps he might, but now I will take all, and I am not sure that I will be willing to allow him even twenty-five dollars a week!" the sick man declared with an ugly sneer.

"And you must bear in mind that at the time when your half-brother made this offer he felt convinced that you had not a shadow of a claim to the Shubaugh estate, and that if he did not choose to give you the money of his own free will there was no power on earth which could compel him to do so."

"Yes, but we will show him now that the boot is on the other leg!" Lemuel declared. "We will put the screws on him in a way that he will despise." And the sick man's voice was full of joy as he spoke, showing that he was gloating over his anticipated triumph.

"Well, it isn't much use for a man to talk to you!" the sport exclaimed in disgust.

"You are not at all inclined to listen to reason."

"I am going to have my own way about this matter; you can depend upon it and if you don't like the way I propose to do business you need not go on any farther," Shubaugh remarked in an extremely ugly way.

"Now that I know that I can prove I am the heir to this big estate I will be able to find plenty of people who will be only too glad to go in with me," the sick man continued, arrogantly.

Joe Phenix had not taken any part in the conversation, but now he judged that it was time for him to say something.

"It seems to me that you are a rather ungrateful sort of fellow," he remarked in his quiet way.

"Here you are really indebted to this man for your life, for there isn't much doubt that if he had not taken you in, and taken care of you, that you would not now be in this world, and so be in no condition to make a fight for your rights."

"When I get the money I can afford to pay him handsomely for all he has done for me, and you will find that I am not the kind of a man to stand on a dollar or two," Shubaugh declared in a patronizing way.

"I see that you do not understand the situation at all," Joe Phenix said, with the air of a judge delivering a sentence.

"Oh, don't I?" the sick man exclaimed, angrily.

"No, you do not, as I think you will have to admit after I get through with my explanation."

"In the first place, I haven't anything to do with you at all," the detective continued.

"It is this gentleman," and he nodded to the veteran sport, "who has employed me."

"Yes, I understand all about that," Shubaugh responded, slowly, and there was a

look on his face which plainly showed that he did not know what the detective was driving at.

"Any information which I have gained in this matter belongs to him, and not to you."

"I should think you would be willing to give it to anybody who would agree to pay you your price," Shubaugh suggested.

"Oh, no, you are wrong about that. The information is his property; and is not for sale to anybody at any price," the detective replied.

"I understand what you mean!" the sick man exclaimed in an angry way. "You are trying to put the screws on me, but I will not have it! You want to force me to do as he says," and the speaker nodded to the veteran sport. "And you want me to understand that if I don't do it, you will not help me."

"Your supposition is correct," Joe Phenix replied. "I do not want to have any business dealings with you."

"Maybe you think that I cannot get along without you?" Shubaugh exclaimed, rendered very angry by the words of the man-hunter.

"I have not taken the trouble to think at all about the matter," the detective retorted.

"But since you have spoken in regard to the subject I will say that it is my opinion you would have considerable trouble in getting the information which I have succeeded in acquiring, and I have no objections to telling you why I think so."

Shubaugh stared at the veteran bloodhound as he went on in his cool, deliberate, matter-of-fact way.

"One of the principal witnesses upon whom you rely is this Doctor Johnson, I believe," Joe Phenix remarked.

"Yes, he knows all about the case, and by his evidence I will not have any difficulty in proving all that I want to prove!" the sick man declared, in a defiant way.

"Is that your opinion?" the detective asked.

"Yes, it is, and it is not only my opinion, but I know that it is so."

"You doubtless think that all you have to do is to go to Bridgeport, find Doctor Johnson, and he will be glad to help you to the best of his ability?"

"There isn't any reason why he should not help me!" the sick man retorted.

"I went to Bridgeport to see this doctor, and found out that he had sold out his practice and gone to parts unknown."

Shubaugh looked surprised.

"He had got into trouble and departed, taking particular care to leave no clue behind which would give any one an idea of where he had gone."

"This is a mighty mysterious thing," the sick man declared, in a sulky way.

"But as it is my business to hunt up men who try tricks of that kind, I succeeded in getting at the doctor."

"Aha! you found him all right, eh?" Shubaugh exclaimed, rubbing his hands gleefully together.

"Oh, yes, I found the doctor, but when I explained to him what was wanted he appeared to be surprised, and replied that he did not remember anything about the matter."

"Eh, how is that?" Shubaugh exclaimed very much amazed.

"I told the doctor why I sought him and explained that you relied upon his evidence to prove your identity, but for some reasons he is not disposed to aid you."

"I don't understand why he should not be willing," the sick man remarked, evidently very disagreeably affected by the news.

"He did not go into any explanation in regard to the matter, for he cut off all inquiry about his motives by declaring that he could not be a witness for you for his memory was so bad that he did not remember anything about the circumstances attending your birth, and when I suggested that he must have a book in which he kept a record of his professional engagements, he replied that he once had, but after he gave up the practice of his profession all his books appertaining to it were destroyed."

"This is a very mysterious affair," Shubaugh declared.

"Yes, it certainly is beyond a doubt," the detective coincided.

"So, you see, the principal witness, upon which you have relied, cannot be depended upon to aid you in the least, for when a man of the doctor's age declares that his memory is so bad that he cannot remember the particulars of transactions which happened thirty odd years ago it will be hard work for anybody to prove that it is not so."

"Oh, yes, it is the old story—one man can lead a horse to the water but forty can't make him drink if the beast makes up his mind that he doesn't want to," the old sport observed.

"I told you that I had secured proof which I thought would be amply sufficient to prove your right to the estate left by your father, but as I did not go into any particulars it strikes me that it will be a very difficult matter for you to find out just what proofs I have procured, or how I managed to get them."

"I suppose the idea of all this is to show me that I can't do any thing without knocking to the general here," Shubaugh said in an extremely sulky way.

"Yes, I wished to show you exactly how matters stand," Joe Phenix replied.

"Well, as far as I am concerned I am quite willing to stop just where I am if you think you can do better without than with me," the general declared.

"If you are going to get an attack of the big head the moment things look as if we stood a chance to win, then I would rather you would get some one else to hold your end up," the sport continued.

"Well, I don't want to be ugly about the matter," the sick man declared, suddenly coming to the conclusion that he had better not quarrel with the man who seemed likely to be able to put a fortune in his grasp.

"I suppose I was a little hasty in speaking, and then, really, I am not worth two cents as a business man."

"I never was able to take care of myself when it came to a trade, and I suppose I would do far better in this deal to allow you two to attend to the business and not attempt to interfere in the matter myself."

"That is my idea, but I may be prejudiced," the general remarked.

"Oh, no, I think you know what you are about, and I am willing to allow you to arrange the matter as you see fit," the sick man replied.

There was very little backbone to Shubaugh, and when he found that the pair were not disposed to permit him to have his own way, in fact were ready to give the matter up rather than submit to his dictation then he "weakened," as the saying is.

"Now you are talking!" the old sport declared.

"I think I have good reasons for carrying out the programme which I have formed," the general continued.

"Yes, I suppose you have thought the matter over carefully," the sick man remarked.

"I have, for we are entered for a big stake and it will not do for us to make any blunders," the sport replied.

"In the first place this is no ordinary lawsuit. There is a couple of millions of dollars involved, and as your half-brother is in full possession of the property there is no doubt whatever but what he will make the hardest kind of a fight before he will give it up."

"Oh, yes, it would only be natural for him to act in that way," Shubaugh remarked.

"Well, my idea is to compromise the matter if it is possible to work the trick in that fashion," the general explained.

"The estate is so big that it can be cut in half, and then each half will be as much money as any one man ought to have."

"Yes, any one who is lucky enough to come in for a million of dollars has no right to complain," the sick man observed.

"Exactly, that is my idea," the general coincided.

"The programme I have laid out is an extremely simple one," the sport continued.

"I want to get the proof in regard to your claim to this estate all together and then, with a good lawyer, call upon your half-brother and see if he will not be willing to compromise the matter."

"In substance we say to him, we think we have got a good case, and are willing that

your lawyers should make a most complete examination.

"If you choose to make a contest, and we win, you will not only lose the estate but will have to account for the money which you have spent since you came in possession of it; if you are content though to compromise we will be satisfied with one half and you can keep the rest."

"That is a mighty good offer it seems to me, and if I had the running of the affair I would not do as well by him," Shubaugh declared.

"It seems to me that it would be wise to avoid a contest if it can be done," Joe Phenix observed.

"Lawsuits are expensive, particularly when a big estate like this is involved; and the lawyers will undoubtedly earn fat fees, and, owing to the law's delays, which are proverbial, it might take ten years to settle the contest, so it would undoubtedly be far better to compromise the matter if it can be arranged," the detective added.

"I suppose you will want a big slice out of my share when I get it," Shubaugh remarked in a querulous way.

"I ought to be well paid for my trouble, of course," the sport replied.

"But I will not put on the screws half as bad as a regular legal shark would," he continued.

"Take a regular firm of lawyers and they would soak you for about twenty-five per cent. and all the expenses.

"Now I will be more moderate in my demands.

"The expenses must be paid by you, and I will be content to take ten per cent. of the stake you win."

"If I get hold of a million the ten per cent. will be a big thing for you," the sick man grumbled.

"Oh, yes, I am aware of that, but you must take into consideration the fact that I am taking a big risk, for I may put out a heap of money and not succeed in getting anything at all."

"It seems to me that you have got a pretty sure thing now, though," Shubaugh observed.

"Yes, it certainly looks so, but if you had seen as many sure things slip up in the last twenty years as I have, you would not be apt to feel certain of anything until you got the cash right in your hand," the general declared.

This brought the interview to an end, and Joe Phenix took his departure after making arrangements to go with the old sport and his lawyer to see young Jacob Shubaugh as soon as the necessary preparations could be made.

CHAPTER XX.

A PROPOSAL.

FROM the sport's apartments Joe Phenix proceeded directly down-town to his office.

He was well satisfied with the progress that he had made in the Shubaugh case.

"If I could only do half as well with the other affairs I should be content," he murmured.

"It was a strange thing that the doctor so intimately connected with the Shubaugh affair should turn out to be the mysterious occupant of the lonely mansion," he continued.

"From what I learned in regard to the old man it seems to be evident that he is not a professional crook, and if he is now in league with evil-doers it is because he has yielded to temptation in his old age.

"It is a very strange affair, take it all together," Joe Phenix muttered after reflecting over the matter for a few moments.

"It seems probable that I was attacked by mistake," he continued. "This ruffian that I captured declared it was so, and now that I have seen what a resemblance there is between myself and this young Shubaugh I am rather inclined to believe that it is the truth.

"The attack was made for the purpose of robbing the man, and was evidently carefully planned.

"Does it follow then that the doctor's house is the headquarters of a gang of crooks?"

After putting this question the man-hunter reflected over the matter for quite a while.

"The doctor himself though is not the sort of man to engineer jobs of the crooked kind," the bloodhound muttered in a musing way.

"The work may be done with his knowledge, but he is not the man to be at the head of such a gang."

Then to the mind of the veteran detective came the remembrance of the man who was the doctor's companion, Professor Magilton, as the neighbors said he was called.

"That fellow had a bad look," the man-hunter mused. "And I should not be surprised if he was engaged in some crooked work; and it may be possible too that the old doctor has no knowledge of what is going on right under his nose; such cases have occurred.

"If this supposition in regard to the doctor's mansion being used by a band of crooks as a headquarters is correct, then it is not strange I was not able to find the fellow whom I pursued through the gate.

"He immediately took refuge in the house, and that is the reason why I could not find him in the garden.

"But I will be able to give my entire attention to this case now, and it will be strange if I cannot unearth the fellows in the long run.

"If there is a gang, there must be three or four of them, but according to the testimony of the neighbors there are only two men in the house besides the doctor, so the others must be outsiders.

"They will have to come to the house to receive orders though; probably they sneak in at night, but as the newsboy is on the watch he will be certain to see them and so I will be posted."

The detective had taken the L road at Sixth avenue and Broadway, and by this time had arrived at his destination, so his speculations came to an end.

As he approached the door of the building where his office was located, a well-dressed young man, having the appearance of a clerk, stepped forward and accosted him.

"Isn't this Mr. Phenix?" he asked.

"Yes, sir, that is my name."

"I would like to have a little private conversation with you if you have no objection," the young man said, and as he spoke he cast a nervous glance around as though he was apprehensive of being observed.

"None at all, sir," the detective replied. "Will you come up-stairs to my office?"

"I had rather not, if it is all the same to you," the other replied with a second nervous glance about the neighborhood.

"There is a quiet little saloon around the corner where we can get a glass of beer and I can say what I want to without any danger of any one catching on."

This was rather mysterious, to say the least, but Joe Phenix appeared to think that it was all a matter of course and replied:

"Very well, I am agreeable."

The saloon to which the young man referred was one of those German places so common in the metropolis, a restaurant and beer shop combined, and as it was now the dull time of the day for business, the saloon was almost deserted.

The young man called for two glasses of beer, and then led the way to a table in a corner, where the two took seats.

The amber fluid of Gambrinus was brought and the pair sampled the liquor with a nod to each other.

Then the young man cast a rapid glance around, just as though he was apprehensive that some one might be playing the spy upon him, and, lowering his voice to a cautious tone, said:

"Mr. Phenix, I have always understood that you are willing to pay a good price for information."

"That statement is correct."

"And you will keep the thing quiet?"

"Oh, yes!"

"You will not give away the man who gives you the tip?"

"Not a give away!"

The young man drew a long breath, and then after another cautious glance around, said:

"I think I can put you up to a piece of news that you will be glad to hear."

"Go ahead! If the news is valuable you can rely on my paying a good price for it," the detective declared.

"It is in regard to this man who assaulted you."

"Mucker?"

"Yes."

"If you can tell me anything about him I will pay a good price."

"As the man is a stranger you have not been able to find out much about him," the young man remarked.

"That is true," the detective assented. "I feel quite sure that the fellow is a crook, but as this is the first time he has ever been caught in New York—possibly it is the first time that he has ever tried his hand at an operation in this city—none of the detectives know him."

"The man is not without friends though," the young fellow suggested.

"Yes, I am aware of that fact, for one of the most prominent criminal lawyers of the city came forward promptly to defend him," Joe Phenix replied.

"And, of course, he was employed by the friends of the man."

"Certainly, no doubt about that."

"And you would like to learn who those friends are, I suppose," the young man suggested.

"I would, because it might give me a valuable clue."

"What is the information worth?"

The man-hunter reflected for a few moments before he answered the question, then he said:

"Well, it is like buying a pig in a poke to set a price, for it is not possible for me to decide whether the information will be of any value until I know what it is."

"Yes, that is true," the other remarked, slowly.

"Well, I will tell you what I will do, Mr. Phenix, I will give you the information, and then you can give me what you think it is worth," he declared, abruptly.

"All right! I am satisfied to go ahead on that basis."

"You see, Mr. Phenix, I have perfect confidence that you will deal fairly with me," the young fellow observed.

"Well, I have dealt with a great many men in my time, and very few have ever complained of my treatment.

"Of course I have come in contact with some cranks—men whom it was not possible to satisfy, no matter what treatment was meted out to them, but such fellows are not worth counting."

"That is true, and I am satisfied that you will do the fair thing by me."

"I will certainly try to," Joe Phenix replied.

"This affair is a rather mysterious one," the young fellow explained.

"You nabbed the man at night, and an account of the affair was in the morning newspapers."

"Yes, these press gentlemen have a keen scent for news, and they never neglect to make the round of the police stations before they give up work for the night."

"You know the lawyers who appeared for Mucker, of course?"

"Oh, yes, and he is a lucky fellow to have such counsel, for they will pull him out of the scrape if it is a possible thing to do," Joe Phenix replied.

And then he added:

"In this case, however, it is not possible, for I have got the fellow so dead to rights that all the lawyers in the country could not get him out of the hole."

"Yes, both of the partners understand that, and the senior member of the firm told the party who came that there was no hope for the man, but he would take the case and do his best, although he considered that the odds were about a million to one that the fellow would be convicted."

"Ah, yes, but his pals had to do something for him, you know, or else the fellow would not be satisfied. I understand the situation," the detective declared.

"You see if his pals had not engaged a lawyer it would have given the man the idea that they had deserted him, and then, in revenge, he might have turned State's evidence and given away the gang."

"Yes, that is true, and that is why the lawyers were engaged so promptly."

"Exactly! the fellows were anxious to show him that his pals were true to him, and so keep him from 'peaching' on them."

"The lawyers were engaged in quite a mysterious way," the young man observed, and then he added, abruptly:

"I don't suppose you care to know how I got possession of this information, as long as I give it you all straight and correct?"

"Oh, no, it does not matter to me. I am not at all curious."

"The party who came to see the lawyer about appearing for the man acted in a strange way, and appeared so mysterious that the attention of a friend of mine was directed to him, and this party made up his mind to see what he was up to, and he happened to be so situated that he could do so without much trouble."

"Yes, I understand," the detective remarked.

"The man began by saying that he had seen an account of the arrest of Mucker in the newspapers, and as he knew him to be a man of good character, he believed there must be some mistake, although it was possible that he had been led away by bad companions, but he desired him to be represented by counsel."

"Both the partners had read the newspaper account, and they concurred in saying that the case appeared to be a pretty bad one."

"Yes, they were right; the man was caught red-handed!" the veteran detective declared.

"The party said he was aware of that, but, possibly, if they took charge of the matter they might be able to find some extenuating circumstances; then he paid over fifty dollars as a retaining fee."

"He was liberal!"

"Of course they took the case."

"Undoubtedly!" Joe Phenix exclaimed. "Neither one of the partners is the kind of man to turn his back on a fifty-dollar note."

"Then he begged that they would be careful not to allow any one to know that he had taken an interest in the case, for he did not desire that his name should get into the newspapers in connection with it."

"That was a plausible excuse."

"Of course they assured the party that he could depend upon their discretion, and not for the world would they reveal his name to any one."

"Then he gave his signature and address so that they could send a communication to him if circumstances arose so as to render such a thing necessary, and took his departure."

"Here is the address."

The young man presented a card, and the veteran detective read the inscription written on it.

"Solomon Magilton," Joe Phenix said aloud.

And the direction gave the doctor's solitary mansion.

"I can't say that I am particularly astonished," Joe Phenix remarked. "For I had an idea that the man had friends in that quarter."

"But as this information confirms your suspicion, it is surely worth something to you?" the young man urged, anxiously.

"Oh, yes, don't worry in regard to that," the detective replied, immediately.

"I did not make the remark with the idea of making it appear that your information was any the less valuable."

"Well, I am glad of that!" the other exclaimed, with a sigh of relief.

Joe Phenix took out his wallet, selected four five-dollar bills, and passed them to the young man, whose eyes glistened as he beheld them.

"I think that twenty dollars is about the right thing," the detective remarked.

"Oh, yes, I am perfectly satisfied with that sum," the other declared, as he folded up the bills and stowed them away in his pocket.

"If you ever secure any other information which you think will be of value to me, I shall be pleased to pay liberally for it."

"All right; I will bear your words in my mind."

"Of course, if we go by the strict letter of the moral law, both of us are doing wrong to make a bargain of this kind," Joe Phenix remarked in a reflective way. "You ought

not to sell the information, and I ought not to buy it."

"Yes, I suppose that is true, but the way the world goes on, such transactions are taking place every day in the week," the other argued.

"Very true, and that is because men do not behave as they ought to do," the veteran detective replied.

"Take a man in my position for instance. It is my business to hunt down rascals, and unless I can secure underhand information of this kind oftentimes the scoundrel would escape capture."

"That is so, and as far as I am concerned I must plead that I need money so deuced badly that I hardly know how to get along."

"Yes, I know how you are situated."

The young man stared.

"You were under the impression that I did not know who you were," the veteran detective continued.

"Yes, I certainly was."

"I had a case a while ago which compelled me to make the rounds of all the pool-rooms in the city and during that trip I came across you."

The young man was troubled and his face plainly showed it.

"I was in disguise, so you did not recognize me," Joe Phenix continued. "You were an intimate associate of the man whom I was after, and in entrapping him I learned all about you."

"This is a surprise to me!" the other declared in a moody way.

"You are the confidential clerk of these lawyers, whose secrets you have betrayed, and the reason why you yielded to the temptation is because you are a pool-room fiend and squander all the money you can get hold of in playing the races."

"Yes, that is true," the other confessed.

"You must stop it or else you will come to grief; it is bound to be so, sooner or later," the detective warned.

"Well, I suppose so, but it is hard work to resist the temptation. I will try though. You will keep my secret?"

"Oh, yes, you can rely upon that."

"Much obliged; and if I can do anything for you I will."

This ended the interview and the pair parted.

CHAPTER XXI.

SWIPSEY'S REPORT.

THE disclosure which the lawyer's clerk had made afforded Joe Phenix much food for thought, and as he proceeded to his office he meditated upon the matter.

"Solomon Magilton is the so-called professor who lives with the doctor in the old mansion," he mused.

"And the fact that he was so prompt to come to the assistance of the captured ruffian by hiring the lawyers to appear for the scoundrel is proof positive that he is a confederate of the two rascals who attacked me."

"The chances are great that the man-of-all-work whom I saw at the house—the fellow who answers to the name of Martin Hitchcraft, is the rascal whom I pursued into the grounds of the house."

"When I saw him I was rather inclined to think that he was not, for he did not appear to be quite so big a man as the foot-pad who made such good use of his heels, but under the circumstances it was not possible for me to get so good a view of the man as to be able to recognize him without any doubt when I met him again."

"This professor is, probably, the man who plans the jobs and Hitchcraft and Mucker the fellows who do the work. There may too be a couple more connected with the gang, for it is but seldom that so few as three work together."

"Now then, does the old doctor know anything about this, or are the gang using his mansion for a shelter without his knowledge?"

The veteran detective pondered for a few moments over this question.

"This is a difficult matter to decide," he said at last.

"But from what little I know of the doctor I am rather inclined to believe that he is not in with the gang."

"According to the story of the Bridgeport people he retired from the practice of profession with a goodly amount of money, and it is not a common thing for a man who has led an upright life for years to descend abruptly to crime—to join a band of crooks—without being forced to the act by the pangs of poverty."

"Of course it is possible that by some unwise speculations the doctor has lost all his money," the man-hunter continued.

"But to judge from the way in which he lives, that surmise is not correct."

"Then it follows that he is the dupe of the professor, who is using his house as a base of operations for a gang without the doctor's knowledge."

Again the acute bloodhound meditated over the situation for a few minutes.

"If it was possible for me to gain admittance to the doctor's household, or put a spy in there for a few days, I could soon solve the riddle, but, judging from what I know of the affair, it would not be possible for me to do either the one or the other."

"And since neither I nor a spy will be able to work inside of the house we must see what we can do on the outside."

"I will put shadows to watch the house and have this professor and the servants tracked."

"If they are crooks, and the chances appear to me to be great that they are, they will undoubtedly have some favorite resort where they meet their acquaintances and while away their leisure hours, for there is not one crooked rascal out of a hundred who is not addicted, more or less, to drink and dissipation."

"If I can succeed in tracking either the professor or Hitchcraft to such a haunt the chances are a hundred to one that in a good disguise I will be able to get on familiar terms with them."

"It is possible, too, that the boy whom I have left on the watch has been able to gain some information of value," the detective mused.

"I will go up and see him, but I will wait until nightfall, for the rascals may be on the watch, and it will not do to let them discover that I am prowling about in their neighborhood."

Joe Phenix acted on this idea.

When the shades of night descended on the metropolis he hired a cab and was driven to the neighborhood of the doctor's lonely mansion.

He descended from the cab on the main avenue, alighting at the clump of trees under which the footpads had lain in ambush.

Instructing the driver to wait for him the detective proceeded on foot.

When he came to the side road upon which the doctor's house was situated he turned into it and went on at a slow pace.

The night was a light one, so all the surroundings were visible to the man-hunter as he proceeded.

As he approached the iron gate of the doctor's mansion he moderated his pace and looked carefully around him in search of Swipse.

There were a few clumps of bushes in the immediate neighborhood, and the detective conjectured that the boy was concealed in one of them.

As he proceeded slowly along he endeavored to discover the hiding-place of his spy, but keen as were the eyes of the man-hunter he was not able to see the boy.

But as he came to the last clump of bushes, which, apparently, was hardly big enough to afford shelter to a good-sized dog, Swipse made his appearance.

"Here I am, boss!" he declared with a grin, ducking his head as he came out.

"Here I am, large as life, an' twice as nat'ral as I heered a comic rooster say at the ay-ter onc't!"

"We will walk along so that if any one should happen to come from the house their attention will not be drawn to us."

"All right, boss, I'm agreeable," the boy replied in his free and easy way.

"Have you succeeded in making any discoveries?" Joe Phenix asked.

"I can't say that I have, although I have stuck tight to this here place."

"First thing in the morning I would scoot off an' get some grub, an' bring back a pocket full of stuff too, so I needn't go

away, an' then at night I would work the same game," the boy explained.

"You must have kept a most diligent watch then."

"But it hain't amounted to anything," the boy replied, in his quaint, old-fashioned way.

"Nobody has been in or out of the house but the three men who belong there."

"The doctor, the red-bearded man and the short, thick-set fellow?" Joe Phenix questioned.

"Yes, them is the three."

"No strangers?"

"Nary a one, man, woman or 'kid!" the boy asserted.

"And the men in the house ain't much on the go either," Swipsev continued.

"The doctor an' the red-bearded bloke were out this morning, an' old red-beard and the short feller came out a while ago."

"What direction did they take?"

"Down the road toward the city."

The detective regarded this as an important piece of information, for it seemed to say that his conjecture in regard to the two having some haunt in the city where they were wont to spend their leisure hours was founded on fact.

"Well, I think the watch on the house might as well be given up as it does not seem to promise to produce any results," the detective remarked.

"All right, boss, jest as you say. I will have to allow that it is mighty dull work, an' comes terrible hard on a feller for to be stretched out like a blamed snake under a bush all day long, but I am willing to stick to it if you say so."

"No, I have other work on hand for you," Joe Phenix replied.

The face of the boy lighted up.

"I am glad to hear that!" Swipsev exclaimed. "An' you kin jest bet your sweet life, boss, dat I will do my level best to work de job to de queen's taste!"

"You need not keep up your watch tomorrow during the day," the detective said. "But at nightfall take up your position here, and if the two men go out, as they did to-night you must follow them."

"Oh, yes, an' I kin do that too, you bet yer boots!" the boy declared.

"You must be very careful how you manage the matter, for if the pair get an idea that a spy in on their track you will not be able to do anything," Joe Phenix continued.

"Oh, yes, I understand all about dat!" the boy responded in his sharp, quick way.

"In course if der blokes knew dat they was being shadowed they are too fly not to put up some job so dat the man who was doing de shadow act wouldn't be able to git in his fine work."

"Exactly! that is the idea."

"Well, boss, although I never did anything of the kind, yet you kin bet your sweet life dat I will work de trick so dat neither one of the two will catch on to me, no matter how fly they may be!" Swipsev asserted in the most confident way.

"I do not doubt that you will be able to do the work in a satisfactory manner," the veteran detective remarked.

And this was no empty compliment, for the man-hunter had a deal of faith in the boy's shrewdness.

"It is probable that the pair were bound for the lower part of the city, and in that case they would take one of the local trains at the station on the Harlem River, which is only a short distance off, and if they select a route of that kind when you are on their track you must get on board the train also and track them until they are harbored in some house in the city, then come to this direction where you will find me."

Joe Phenix gave the boy the number of the tenement house on the avenue where he had his rooms, and a couple of dollars for his expenses, as he explained.

The boy was delighted by the confidence reposed in him, and declared he could make a success of it, and then Joe Phenix departed.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE BOY IS BAFFLED.

ALTHOUGH the veteran detective had a deal of faith in the boy's ability, yet, as he was one of the men who believed in making

everything as sure as possible, he made up his mind to put a couple of his best shadows on the case.

"As Shakespeare says: 'I will make assurance doubly sure, and take a bond of fate,'" the detective quoted as he was being driven down town.

Acting on this idea he hunted up two of his best spies in the metropolis, and explained to them what was wanted.

As the detective felt certain that if the pair came down town they would take the train at the Harlem River station he directed the shadows to lay in wait for their men at the station, furnishing such an exact description of the two that it would not be possible for the spies to make a mistake.

And after having thus carefully arranged matters Joe Phenix prepared himself to await the development of events with as much patience as possible.

The veteran detective was considerably annoyed by his failure to discover the house with the brick garden wall.

The most reasonable explanation of the mystery was that the message on the shingle was a hoax and no such house existed.

An ordinary man would have been satisfied with this solution of the riddle, and would not have troubled himself further about the matter, but, as the reader who has followed the fortunes of the renowned detective as related in the series of tales of which he has been the hero, knows full well, Joe Phenix was a very extra-ordinary man.

There was something about the message on the shingle which gave him the idea that it was a genuine communication.

He could not have very well explained what that something was if he had been pressed to do so.

All he could have said was that it appeared to him to bear the ear-marks of a genuine communication, and so in his own mind he was well satisfied that it was not a hoax.

But it was very strange, though, that he had not been able to locate the house, because on account of its being surrounded by the brick wall, which was not a common thing, he ought to have found it without much trouble.

There was little doubt in his mind that he had hit upon the right locality, and therefore it was a wonder that neither the policemen nor the letter-carriers could give him any information in regard to it, for these two classes of men had a most complete knowledge of the houses in their districts.

The acute detective had given a deal of thought to the matter, and as far as he could see there was but one solution to the mystery.

The writer of the communication was a young and inexperienced girl, and she had made a mistake when she stated that the house was surrounded by a brick wall.

Of course it was not an easy matter to explain how any one could possibly make a mistake about a simple matter of the kind, but such blunders have been made.

If the brick garden wall was left out of the question, then the detective had come across a half-a-dozen houses, any one of which would fit the girl's description.

"It would not be a bad idea for me to rig up as a Jew peddler and try a house to house inspection," the man-hunter murmured, in a reflective way.

"By putting in a good stock of laces and notions, and offering them for about one-half of what they are worth, I would be pretty certain to be able to gain admittance to nearly all the houses, and in that way might be able to pick up some information."

The more the detective reflected upon this idea the better he was pleased with it, but after considerable thought he concluded not to try it until he had received the report of the shadows whom he had engaged to track the professor and his companion.

On the following evening, then, the veteran detective, in company with his lieutenant, Tony Western, waited in the front apartment of his flat in the tenement-house.

The little alarm-clock, ticking away on the mantel-piece, showed that it was after nine, and Tony Western, noticing how late it was getting, suggested that it was about time they heard from the shadows.

"Yes, you are right," Joe Phenix coin-

cided. "Supposing that the fellows started at eight o'clock, it ought not to take them over an hour to get down-town, so we should get a report very soon—that is, if everything has gone all right," he added.

"Yes, it is possible that just because you put the shadows on the track the pair made up their minds not to come down-town to-night," Tony Western suggested.

"Well, we must expect to have matters run crooked once in a while," Joe Phenix replied.

"A man would be lucky indeed if his plans always worked successfully," he continued.

"Very true, and if a fellow is fortunate enough to hit it three times out of five he has reason to congratulate himself," Tony Western remarked.

"Your calculation is about correct, I think," Joe Phenix replied.

At this point the conversation was interrupted by a ring at the door-bell.

As there were four families on the floor and only one bell for the four apartments, the agent of the house had followed the prevailing custom and arranged a code of signals.

If a visitor desired to communicate with the front apartment on the right he rung one bell, two bells for the front rooms on the left, three bells for the rear right apartment and four for the one on the left, which was Joe Phenix's abode.

All the spies had been instructed in regard to the four bells, and now when the applicant for admission rung four times, Joe Phenix hastened to the door.

It was Swipsev, and all out of breath from the haste in which he had come.

The veteran detective conducted him to his apartment.

The boy looked askance when he discovered that there was a stranger in the room, and then he glanced at Joe Phenix in a questioning way as though doubtful as to whether he should speak freely in the presence of the unknown.

The man-hunter immediately comprehended what was passing in the boy's mind and hastened to explain:

"This gentleman is associated with me in the detective line so you need not fear to give an account of your work," Joe Phenix remarked.

"All right, boss, but you see I didn't know him an' so I was afeard I might make a bad break if I said anything," Swipsev observed, ducking his head in a respectful way to Tony Western.

"You were acting prudently in being cautious," Joe Phenix affirmed. "But now proceed with your story."

"I did jest as you told me, an' about an hour ago de two blokes, de red-bearded cove and de odder feller, w'ot looks like a boxer, came out of de house an' went down de road."

"I waited until dey had a good start, and den I went in for to play de shadow act, an' you kin bet yer sweet life dat I played it to de queen's taste!"

"You had no difficulty, then, in following them?" Joe Phenix asked.

"Not a mite!" Swipsev declared, emphatically. "It was jest as easy as rolling off a log! De night was a leetle dark, an' de pair tramped on without even taking the trouble to look behind them, so I was able to do de sneak act in fu'st-class style."

"They had no suspicion that a spy was on their track, and that fact gave you a great advantage," Joe Phenix remarked.

"Yes, boss, I reckon it did," Swipsev replied.

"Neither one of de blokes ever took a single squint behind them clear from de house to the railroad depot."

"They were bound for the city, then?" the veteran detective observed.

"Yes, boss, they were, and arter dey took de train, I hopped on board, too."

"That was right," Joe Phenix declared, shaking his head in an approving manner.

"It wasn't no trouble at all for to do de shadow act wid dese blokes, for dey was talking togedder all de way down, an' didn't pay no attention to nobody."

"You may thank your lucky stars that you had such an easy job," Joe Phenix observed.

"Oh, yes, it was a puddin', an' don't you forget it!" the boy asserted.

"Well, boss, de train come into de Grand Central Depot, an' when de two fellers went out wid de crowd, I was right after dem.

"Dey went down Forty-second street to Sixth avenoo, an' den down de avenoo cross Broadway, an' den into a cigar shop."

The veteran detective nodded his head in approval.

"It wasn't much of a cigar shop, an' had a wine-room in de back of it, so de sign said," the boy explained.

"Dere was a screen at de end of de cigar counter so you couldn't see w'ot was going on in de wine room," Swipsey continued.

"An' I wanted to see w'ot de two coves were up to, 'cos it didn't look to me de kind of place dat such fellers would care to go into, so I jest bought a couple of papers from a kid w'ot come along right then, an' marched into de saloon wid 'em, as big as you please!"

"That was a smart trick," the veteran detective remarked.

The boy looked intensely pleased by the compliment.

"Well, boss, I allers try to be jest as fly as dey makes 'em, an' I ain't been runnin' 'round de streets of New York ever since I was a little weeney kid fer nothin'!"

"Yes, I should judge that you have made good use of your ears and eyes," Joe Phenix remarked.

"Of course it was old business for me to hop into a saloon, an' bone the blokes to buy an extra, but would you believe it? When I got behind the screen, into de saloon, neither one of the two blokes were dere!" the boy exclaimed with an expression of wonder on his face.

"How was that?" the detective inquired.

"Blowed if I know!" Swipsey responded with a grave shake of the head.

"How long was it after the men went into the saloon before you came in?" Joe Phenix inquired.

"A min'te or two," the boy replied. "I don't believe it was a quite over two min'tes, for the kid come right along, an' as he only had two papers left it didn't take me long to buy him out, an' den I went right in."

"Perhaps they went into a back room," Joe Phenix suggested.

"Dat is wot I t'ought," Swipsey responded. "Dere was only a couple of sportin' looking blokes in de place, an' arter I ax 'em fer to buy, an' dey wouldn't have it, I made a break for a side door—it was de only door dere was in de place, thinkin' maybe, dat it led to anudder room, but de door was locked so I couldn't open it, an' de barkeep' he caught onto me right to onc't."

"Hello, you kid, where are you tryin' for to go?" he yelled.

"Doesn't dis 'ere door lead to de back room?" I sung out as bold as brass.

"No, it don't, an' dere isn't ary back room!" he yelled, den he shook his fist at me, said I was too fresh, an' if I didn't git out lively he would warm me!"

"You left, of course," the man-hunter remarked in a thoughtful way.

"Oh, yes, I dusted out quick, you bet!" the boy replied.

"You see I had an idee dat de two blokes might have tumbled to my little game aldough dey didn't act as if dey had any suspicion dat any one was trying to play de shadow act on dem, an' if dey had caught onto my racket, den they might have skipped out of de side door an' down de street."

"Yes, if they suspected that they were followed it would be natural for them to try a game of that kind," the detective remarked.

"But when I got out in the street dere wasn't any signs of dem, an' if they had gone out by de side door dey couldn't have got away for dere wasn't any time," the boy declared, evidently very much perplexed by the affair.

"It is a strange circumstance, and I will take a look at the place myself," Joe Phenix remarked.

"Possibly I may be able to solve the mystery of their disappearance."

"Mebbe you can, but it is too much for me!" Swipsey declared with a doubtful shake of the head.

"There will not be anything else on hand for you to-night," the veteran detective remarked.

"Come to-morrow afternoon at five and then I may have something for you to do," the boy grinned and then departed.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE SHADOW SPEAKS.

"THIS is rather a mysterious circumstance," Tony Western remarked after the boy was gone.

"Yes, and I do not exactly understand how the trick was worked, either," Joe Phenix replied in a meditative way.

"It looks as if the fellows discovered that they were being shadowed by the boy, and went into the saloon for the express purpose of throwing him off the track," the other observed.

"It certainly does have that appearance, and I wonder at the men being sharp enough to find out that the boy was playing the spy upon them, for he is a cunning fellow, and I have no doubt that he took great care not to be discovered."

"It is a strange case," Tony Western declared. "And to my mind it seems to suggest that the pair are old crooks, or else they never would have been able to work this vanishing trick so neatly."

"The circumstances certainly justify the suspicion," Joe Phenix coincided.

"Do you know anything about this cigar shop with the wine room in the rear?" Tony Western asked.

"No, I do not, and that makes me think that it must be a new place, for I am well acquainted with the saloons in that neighborhood; but from the boy's description I am not able to locate this particular place."

"As a rule saloons of that kind are not apt to be all right," the other remarked.

"Very true, for two-thirds of them are off-color," Joe Phenix asserted.

"Both the cigar shop and the wine-room are only blinds to cover up some illegitimate business—a pool room, a gambling hell, or something of that kind," the detective continued.

"That particular locality is full of saloons, and some of them are pretty tough places."

"Yes, some of the greatest dives that New York has ever known have existed in that locality, and I should not be surprised if there was something wrong about this place, but although the fellows managed to throw the boy off the scent yet as I took the precaution to put a couple of extra good shadows on the case I think the chances are great that I shall get a report from one of them which will explain the mystery."

"As the affair has turned out you acted wisely to put some old and experienced shadows on the track," Tony Western declared.

"Well, I got the idea into my head that I was dealing with a couple of extra slippery customers, and so I took pains to put the best men I could on the case," Joe Phenix explained.

"You ought to get a report from one of them pretty soon," Tony Western suggested.

"Yes, I expect to see one of the two at any moment."

And then, just as the veteran detective completed the sentence, there came the four rings at the door-bell.

"That is my man, I think," Joe Phenix remarked as he rose for the purpose of admitting the applicant.

The man whom the veteran detective ushered into the apartment was well-along in years, fifty-five or thereabouts, of medium size, with a smooth-shaven, unexpressive face, and as he was clad in a well-worn, dark business-suit he presented the appearance of a professional man who had waged a long and unsuccessful fight with fortune.

He had a peculiar, smirking, oily way, one of the men who believed in getting through the world as easily as possible, a fellow with very little back-bone, apparently, who was all things to all men, and always ready to apologize on the slightest provocation.

Upon entering the room he made a low bow to Tony Western, and slipped into the chair to which Joe Phenix nodded with the air of a man who was ready to do almost everything for the sake of being agreeable.

"Where is Dutchy?" the veteran detective questioned.

"I left him to keep watch on the game while I came to make the report, for I did not know but what you might want the man followed right up," the spy explained, and

as he spoke he looked askance at Tony Western, and Joe Phenix guessed from the expression on his face that he was surprised at the man-hunter's speaking so openly before a stranger.

"By the way, I believe that you never met Mr. Western," Joe Phenix remarked, and he nodded to his lieutenant.

"No, I don't think I ever had that pleasure," the spy responded, with a low bow to Western.

"This is my assistant, Tony Western, a gentleman of vast experience in the detective line, and with whom you are likely to have considerable business dealings in the future."

"Very happy indeed to make Mr. Western's acquaintance," the spy responded, with a very low and humble bow.

"And if he should have occasion to need the services of a man in my line I can assure him that I will be proud to receive his commands," he remarked.

"Our friend here is named Maginnis—Major Tom Maginnis everybody calls him, and I can assure you that in his line as a careful, patient shadow, there is not a man in New York who is his superior."

The major smiled, and then he shook his head in a deprecating way.

"Mr. Phenix really does me too much honor," he observed, in his apologizing style.

"Oh, no, only treating you with simple justice, that is all!" Joe Phenix declared.

"Of course, the major's shadow business is all *sub-rosa*," the veteran detective continued.

"There are a few of us old hands for whom he works, but his real business is in the horse line."

"Yes, sir, I am on the turf," and the major smiled and bowed.

"I have no doubt that you have often seen his advertisement in the newspapers, Western," Joe Phenix affirmed.

"He is a turf prophet—one of the wise men who, for a consideration, is amiable enough to tell the world at large just what horses are going to win."

"Ah, yes, I see," Tony Western observed.

"The major is a ubiquitous fellow when it comes to the turf prophet business," Joe Phenix explained.

"Sometimes in the columns of the daily newspaper he figures as A. B. C.," the detective continued. "Then again as X. Y. Z., and then again, when the crop of flats is unusually bad and it is necessary to offer strong inducements to get the gulls to invest their money in turf tips, the major becomes 'The Great National Bureau of Turf Information,' or offers flattering inducements to the public at large as the 'Unrivaled Horseman's Syndicate' the only reliable sellers of accurate racing information."

"We have to try all sorts of dodges to get the Jays to give up their ducats some times," the major remarked. "And then again at certain periods the fools are almost tumbling over each other in their anxiety to get the correct tips so they will be certain to put their money on the winning horses."

"Well, it is certainly true that it takes all sorts of men to make a world," Tony Western observed.

"Oh, yes, that is an ancient saying, but there is undoubtedly a vast amount of truth in it," Joe Phenix remarked.

"The major manages to pick up a comfortable living by acting as a turf prophet, for as fast as one set of flats are cleaned out, and so are compelled to retire from the game, another lot of idiots come forward."

"It is a common saying among us gentlemen who are unlucky enough to be compelled to live by our wits that there is a sucker born every minute, and on such game we thrive," the major explained.

"I happened, in an accidental way, to make the major's acquaintance, and I soon comprehended that for certain kinds of shadow work he would be a valuable man, and so I suggested the matter to him," the veteran detective explained.

"At first I was a little doubtful of my abilities—a little afraid, you understand, that I could not do the work as it ought to be done," the major remarked. "But Mr. Phenix knew me better than I knew myself, and I have managed to do pretty well so far."

"The major has contrived to make a success out of every job that I have intrusted to him," Joe Phenix declared.

"This gentleman has a partner too in his turf business, a German by descent who bears the appearance of being as innocent a Dutchman as ever crossed the ocean, but who, in reality, is a shrewd and wide-awake fellow.

"Dutchy, everybody calls him," the veteran detective continued. "And he and the major, taken together, make a strong team in the shadow line."

"Mr. Phenix really overrates our merits, I think," the major observed in a modest, deprecating way.

"Not at all!" the man-hunter declared.

"Well, one thing I will have to admit," the major observed. "And that is that both Dutchy and myself are on our metal when we go in to do any work, and whoever employs us can rely upon it that we will do our level best to make a success out of the affair."

"Men who go to work in that spirit, even if they are only possessed of a fair amount of ability, are pretty sure to make their mark," Joe Phenix observed.

"But now to business, major, how did you make out?" the veteran detective questioned.

"We went to the mile-road station on the Hudson River, Dutchy and I," the shadow explained.

"Dutchy was got up to look like a grocery clerk off on a holiday, while I did not assume any disguise, for I thought it was not advisable.

"We got on the ground early, so we had about an hour to wait before our men made their appearance, but as soon as they came we recognized them immediately, thanks to the very accurate description which you furnished."

"The red-bearded fellow is so strikingly unlike the usual run of men that it was an easy matter to describe him so that he could be recognized by a stranger," Joe Phenix remarked.

"The pair got on board of the first train that came along, then Dutchy and I followed their example, Dutchy getting in at the forward end of the car which the pair had entered, and I at the rear end, so it was not possible for either of the men to leave the train without Dutchy or myself being aware of the move."

"That was well arranged," Joe Phenix remarked with a nod of approbation.

"Well, when Dutchy and I go in for a game of this kind, we always try to fix the matter so that it will be difficult, if not impossible, for our man to give us the slip," the major explained.

"That is certainly the right way to go to work," Joe Phenix declared.

"I will do our men the credit, though, of saying that they never made a move, and did not act as if they had the slightest suspicion that there was any danger of their being shadowed."

"There is no reason why either one of the two should get an idea of that kind into their heads," Joe Phenix observed.

"Both of them are strangers, and if they are crooks, have never done any work in the city, and so they do not have any idea that any one suspects that they are not all right."

"No wonder, then, that they were not apprehensive of danger," the major remarked.

"Well, neither of the two moved until the train got to the Grand Central Depot, then they left the car with the rest of the passengers, Dutchy and I keeping close watch on them.

"Up Forty-second street to Sixth avenue they went, down Sixth avenue, and then the pair went into a cigar shop with a saloon attachment in the rear, and there they are now, with Dutchy keeping watch, so if they make a move before I come back, he will be able to track them.

"I thought perhaps that you might want to get right at them, and so I hurried to report," the major added.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE TALE OF A "CROOKED" SALOON.

"You have done very well," Joe Phenix remarked.

"Yet, strange as it may appear to you, what you have told me is no news," the detective continued, with a slight smile on his stern features.

"Oh, did you know that the two had gone to this place before I told you?" the major inquired, in surprise.

"Yes; you see, I am well served, but the shadow who anticipated your report was puzzled by a circumstance which it is possible you may be able to explain," the detective observed.

"Maybe I can. What is it?" the major asked.

"The pair entered the cigar shop, then passed behind the screen into the saloon, and a couple of minutes later, when my shadow went into the place with the idea of seeing what they were doing, he was surprised to find that they had disappeared, and yet my man is certain that they did not come out on Sixth avenue again."

"Yes, I can swear to that, for I had an argument with Dutchy which lasted over five minutes from the time the pair went into the shop, and as we were both keeping our eyes on the place, I am positive that they did not come out.

"You see, Dutchy thought I ought to stay and keep watch while he came with the report, but I argued that as you had always done business with me, and not with him, that I was the one who ought to go," the major explained.

"Yes, I understand," Joe Phenix remarked.

"When Dutchy takes an idea of that kind into his head he is always very set, and though I usually succeed in having my own way with him, yet it takes a deal of argument sometimes, and, really, to-night I suppose I had to chin to him for nearer ten minutes than five before I could convince him that it was best for me to make the report."

Joe Phenix nodded.

He now understood how it was that the newsboy succeeded in making his report so much in advance of the major's.

"Then the pair disappeared in a most mysterious manner from the saloon before they had been in there over a couple of minutes?" the major remarked with a quiet little laugh.

"Yes, so the report said," Joe Phenix replied. "Can you explain the mystery?"

"Oh, yes, without any trouble," the other replied in a confident way.

"Do you happen to know anything about this cigar-saloon joint?" the major continued.

"No, I do not, and it must be a new place, for I am well-posted in regard to that neighborhood," Joe Phenix answered.

"Yes, it has only been running about a month, and though I have been in the place a dozen times with the horse 'tout' who furnishes me with the most of my tips, yet it was only the other day that I got an idea of just what kind of a place it was," the major explained.

Joe Phenix nodded, as a token that he was paying strict attention to the story.

"This horse tout is a pretty bad egg," the major explained. "He has been mixed up in all sorts of scrapes, and has been in jail more times than he has fingers and toes, but he is a mighty good man on tips, and so I have to do business with him, although I admit that I don't like to, for although I don't profess to be any better than the law allows, yet I have never seen the inside of a jail as a prisoner yet, and I do not calculate to do anything which will be likely to make me acquainted with that disagreeable experience."

"You are wise to make such a resolve, and wiser still to hold steadfast to it," the man-hunter declared.

"But this man of whom I speak is a dyed-in-the-wool crook, and though he professes to make a living by following the races, yet, in reality, that is only a blind, for he is always ready for a piece of crooked work."

"I understand just what kind of a man he is," Joe Phenix remarked.

"I have encountered quite a number of such fellows during my professional career," the veteran detective continued.

"Of course I only associate with this cove in the way of business," the major explained.

"But the other day, out to Guttenberg, I had to stay until quite late at night in order

to attend to some business, and while I was waiting to see certain parties I encountered this man.

"For a wonder he had so much liquor on board that he was inclined to be talkative.

"I tried to get away from him, but it was no use, for he stuck to me like a leech, and as I make it a rule never to quarrel with any one, I got along with him as well as I could.

"Then, too, I made a virtue of necessity and calculated that as he wanted to talk I might pick up some information which might be of advantage to me."

"Under the circumstances I don't blame you," Joe Phenix observed.

"Among other things the man spoke of this cigar-saloon joint and gave me a whole history of the concern," the major explained. "The cigar shop is a blind, the saloon a blind too."

"Is that possible?" the man-hunter asked in surprise.

"Yes, the men who run the place do not calculate to make any money out of either the cigar shop or the saloon, but down stairs, in what used to be the cellar, is a nicely fitted up saloon and restaurant combined with a half a dozen small, private rooms in the rear."

"Ah, yes, I understand!" Joe Phenix exclaimed.

"This place is a regular house-of-call for thieves, and no one who is not a well-known crook, and introduced to the barkeeper by a man whom he is sure he can trust, can possibly gain admission."

"This accounts then for the mysterious disappearance of the pair," Joe Phenix remarked in a reflective way.

"Yes, they went down stairs to the underground saloon," the major asserted.

"There is a side door which leads out into an entry," the shadow continued. "After a man passes through the door—and the door by the way is always kept fastened, but the bartender, by means of a wire, with a handle under the bar, can open it when he feels that the customer is all right—well, as I said, after a man gets into the entry he can either go up stairs, go out the front door, or proceed to the rear of the passage where there is a door which leads into a small yard, and another one which being directly under the stairs looks as if it led to the cellar, but, apparently, this door is securely nailed up."

"Upon my word! these fellows have arranged the thing in an extremely ingenious way!" Joe Phenix exclaimed.

"The man who understands the ropes knocks at this door in a peculiar way, then a panel opens and a man, who is always on the watch there, examines the applicant for admission," the major explained.

"The men certainly take precautions enough," the man-hunter observed.

"Yes, as the fellow explained to me, the coves who run the place mean to make sure that no one but a regular, well-known crook shall be able to get in," the major said in conclusion.

"This is a new wrinkle to me," Joe Phenix observed. "And yet I have been in the detective business for years."

"According to your description this is a sort of a crooks' club," the veteran continued.

"Yes, that is the idea exactly, and after a crook makes a good big stake he knows that he can go to this place, and while his money lasts he will be treated like a lord."

"A great idea!" commented Joe Phenix.

"The successful crook can throw his money away—indulge in the wildest kind of debauchery, and feel perfectly safe that no matter how drunk he may get there is no danger of his falling into the hands of the police."

"Really, now, when you come to think of it, this idea of a thieves' club is extremely novel!" Tony Western declared.

"Yes, I think I will have to examine into this matter," Joe Phenix remarked.

"You will, probably, find that a difficult game to work—that is, if there is any reliance to be placed upon the statements of my informant," the major observed.

"He declared that a man must be introduced by a crook, who was well-known to the proprietors of the place, and this crook

must bear witness that he knew the man whom he wanted to introduce to be also a first-class crook, or else he stood no chance of getting in," the shadow explained.

"Oh, yes, I understand all about that, and from the fact that these two men, whom I employed you and Dutchy to shadow, apparently found no difficulty whatever in gaining admission to the crooks' club, it is plain that they must be prominent members of the crooked fraternity," Joe Phenix argued.

"Yes, it certainly looks as if there wasn't any doubt about that," the major admitted.

"This information is important, and when I come to settle with you for this shadowing business I will give you an extra twenty-five for it."

The major smiled and rubbed his hands softly together.

"I am very much obliged, Mr. Phenix," he said. "It is a pleasure to do business with a gentleman like yourself for you never hesitate to pony up the ducats when a man does good work," the shadow declared.

"It is always my policy to encourage a man to do his best," Joe Phenix replied.

"I want a man to do his utmost for me, and am always ready to pay liberally, for it is my idea that if a man knows that his efforts are appreciated he will be certain to do far better work than if he has an idea that his employer has not a good opinion of his labors."

"Oh, yes, Mr. Phenix, you are certainly right in that conclusion," the major exclaimed.

"I think so, and have always worked in that line ever since I had any thing to do with the detective business," the man-hunter replied.

"Well, what shall we do now?" the major asked.

"Nothing more at present."

"Give up shadowing these men!" the major asked, evidently somewhat surprised.

"Yes, I have found all I wanted to know about them at present," Joe Phenix replied.

"My object in putting a watch upon them was to discover just what kind of men the two were," the detective continued.

"They are a couple of crooks," the major asserted. "There isn't much doubt about that, for if they were not crooks they could not have secured admission to this underground saloon."

"Exactly! that point is well taken," the veteran detective observed. "And as I am satisfied in regard to the true characters of the men I do not need to bother my head any more about them at present."

"Ah, yes, I see," the major observed.

"So you can return to Dutchy and tell him that nothing more needs to be done at present."

"Very well, I will attend to it," and then the major departed.

CHAPTER XXV.

A DEEP GAME.

"THIS major is a first class man," Tony Western remarked after the shadow withdrew.

"Oh, yes, I do not know of any better expert in his line in the city," Joe Phenix replied.

"He most certainly made a complete success out of his job," the lieutenant observed.

"Yes, and his report in regard to the character of the joint is one of the most important bits of information which has come to me for a long time."

"New York is notorious for possessing all kinds of saloons, but I had no idea that any joint of this kind existed in the city, and yet I rather flattered myself that I was about as well-posted in regard to the metropolis as any man who could be scared up from the Battery to High Bridge."

"Yes, the idea of the underground saloon, the crook's club-house, is an extremely novel one, and I do not doubt that the men who got it up are fairly coining money out of it, for when the average crook is lucky enough to win a big stake his money always seems to burn a hole in his pocket, as the saying is, and he seems to take a delight in getting rid of the cash as soon as possible."

"It is the old story, easy got, easy gone," Tony Western remarked.

"I am very glad indeed that the major

was able to give me all the particulars in regard to this underground resort for now I think I will have a chance to get at my men," Joe Phenix observed in a reflective way.

"You have got a scheme in your head?" Tony Western asked.

"Yes, I have an idea which I think I can carry out, and if I can the chances are great that I will be able to nab both of my birds."

"That will be good."

"You see, Western, I take a personal interest in this matter for I think both of these men were concerned in the attack on me," Joe Phenix explained.

"One planned the job, and the other, with the assistance of the man I captured, carried it out."

"Yes, there is not much doubt about that," Tony Western declared.

"It is true that there was a mistake made, and I was, really, not the man against whom the attack was directed, but the assault was made on me all the same, and it was through no fault of the ruffians that I was not killed."

"That is undoubtedly correct," the other remarked. "A couple of scoundrels like these fellows are not particular whether they commit murder or not so long as there is a chance for them to make a good stake and escape capture."

"Now then, as a rule, I do not believe in tempting a man to commit a crime so as to be able to get a chance to nail him," Joe Phenix remarked, slowly, and thoughtfully.

"No, it is hardly the fair thing," Tony Western replied. "Still, there are cases where I would consider that a man would be perfectly justified in doing it, going on the old adage you know, that the end justifies the means."

"Yes, you are right, there are cases when a man-hunter, like myself, is justified in adopting almost any course in order to get his game."

"Certainly!" Tony Western exclaimed.

"Of course I do not know much about these fellows, but from the little I have found out, I have got the impression that they are two extra smart crooks, and unless I use some unusual measures I will not be able to capture them."

"Under the circumstances I should not hesitate to use any and all means which would appear likely to be successful!" the other declared, in a most decided way.

"Yes, I think you are right," Joe Phenix observed, slowly, and with the air of a man who was giving the subject much thought.

"I am surely justified in laying a trap for these scoundrels if ever a man was justified in hunting down rascals," he continued.

"And since they are so cunning that it is not possible for me to get at them in a fair way, then I must try foul."

"They are fair game to my thinking, and I would go for them in any way I could!" the other declared.

Joe Phenix fixed his eyes on the clock. It lacked a few minutes of ten.

"Do you remember Hank Kinnie, the pugilist, the man who goes by the nick-name of Mace's Chicken?" the veteran detective asked.

"Oh, yes, I was with you when we nailed him and two others for cracking that crib out Fordham way," Tony Western replied.

"And, by the way, speaking of Kinnie, it was always a mystery to me how it was that he contrived to get off that time, for I thought you had plenty of evidence to send him up the river with the rest to the stone jug."

"I suppressed the evidence and saved the man from Sing Sing on account of his family," the veteran detective answered.

"He had a sick wife and three little children; it was the man's first offense, and if he had not been led by drink into bad company it is almost certain that he would not have had anything to do with the matter."

"I understand; you acted as judge and jury, and decided the case without giving the authorities a chance to come in."

"Yes, under the circumstances I thought I was justified in so doing. If the man had been convicted and gone to Sing Sing for two or three years it would, probably, have killed the wife, and the children would have gone to the poor-house, for there wasn't a soul in the world to look after them."

"Out of mercy to the wife and helpless little ones I let up on the man, and then, as I explained, he was more foolish than criminal."

"But I say, governor, the man doesn't bear a very good reputation," Tony Western observed.

"I have heard some of the Headquarters detectives declare it was their opinion that he was mixed up with crooked work right along and that his boxing was only a blind, and I myself have seen him in the company of notorious crooks in the Bowery sporting houses."

A slight smile appeared on Joe Phenix's stern face.

"The detectives at Headquarters are tolerably smart fellows, but they don't know every thing," he observed.

"In the first place all these pugilists who hang out in the Bowery sporting houses associate more or less with crooks, for all these criminals take pride in having a deal of sporting blood; and then another fact, which is known only to the Chicken and myself, is, that after I managed to get him out of the ugly scrape in which he had been foolish enough to become entangled I made arrangements with him to act as one of my stool pigeons, and I am pleased to be able to say that he has done most excellent work."

"Ah, yes, I understand," Tony Western exclaimed. "And in order to be valuable to you in that line he must associate with the crooks."

"Exactly, and, of course, if it was suspected that he had any thing to do with me his usefulness would be materially impaired."

"Certainly! no doubt about that!"

"I think the Chicken may be able to give me some information in regard to this crooks' paradise, so I wish you would take a walk down the Bowery and see if you can't find him in some one of the sporting saloons."

"Oh, I don't think there will be any difficulty in hunting him up."

"If you can find him, say that I want to see him here as soon as possible. He has been here a half a dozen times, and so knows just where to come."

"All right. I will attend to the matter immediately." And then Tony Western took his departure.

Joe Phenix procured a book, in order to while away the time.

In just an even half-hour from the time that Tony Western departed, the four rings came at the door.

Joe Phenix glanced at the clock.

"He has not lost any time," he murmured, as he proceeded to admit the visitor.

It was the well-known "Mace's Chicken," as the veteran detective had expected.

He was a man of thirty, or thereabouts, a "light-weight," weighing about a hundred and forty, and was a typical boxer in all respects, a short-haired, bullet-headed man, very muscularly built, and with a peculiar cat-like tread.

"How are you, governor?" he said, with a grin and a duck of his bullet-shaped head, as he came into the room.

"Oh, I am all right; nothing to complain of," Joe Phenix replied, as he ushered the other into the apartment.

"Help yourself to a chair."

"Yes, sir."

The boxer sat down, removed his hat, hung it on his knee, took a glance around, and then fixed his eyes upon the face of the veteran detective.

"Something up, governor, that you wanted to see me in such a hurry?" he asked.

"Yes, I want to get a little information from you."

"All right, governor, I am yours to command!" the boxer declared.

"Do you know anything about a certain saloon on Sixth avenue, with an underground apartment, to which none but well-known and recognized crooks are admitted?"

Mace's Chicken gave utterance to a low whistle, a sign that he was considerably surprised.

"You don't mean to say, governor, that you have caught on to that racket?" the boxer exclaimed.

"Yes, the place has recently come under my notice, and I want to get all the information I can in regard to it."

The Chicken shook his head, and a look appeared on his face which seemed to indicate that he did not desire to converse on the subject.

"You are posted—you can tell me all about the place?" Joe Phenix queried, finding that the other did not seem inclined to speak.

"But I say, governor, what do you want to bother your head about this place for?" the boxer asked, abruptly.

"Don't you think that it is likely to prove interesting to me?" the veteran detective asked.

"No, really, I don't!" the Chicken declared.

"And that is honest now, I tell you!" he continued.

"I am giving you the straight tip," the boxer added, earnestly.

"My dear fellow, I don't think I will be able to agree with you about this matter," Joe Phenix replied.

"Yes, but I don't believe that you understand just what kind of a joint it is," the other argued.

"Well, it is possible that may be true, and it is for the purpose of finding out all the particulars in regard to the place that I have sent for you."

"There isn't anything wrong goes on in the dive, you know!" the boxer declared.

"As far as the saloon itself is concerned it is as square a joint as there is in the city!"

"But unless I have been misinformed it is only patronized by crooks."

"That is correct!"

"And it is not possible for a stranger to gain admittance unless some patron, who is well-known to the men who run the place, is willing to testify that he knows of his own knowledge that the applicant for admission is a crook."

"Yes, that is correct."

"Well, under the circumstances then I think that it is advisable for me to take a look at the place."

"Now, really, governor, it will not do you any good!" the Chicken exclaimed.

"It is just as I tell you, the place is as square as a die!"

"Of course, I know that nobody but a crook is allowed to come in, but there isn't any crooked work, or any funny business goes on in the saloon."

"After the boys get inside they just lay themselves out for a little, good solid enjoyment."

"You understand, governor, it is a kind of a club, and run just the same as the high-toned clubs up-town."

"S'pose you want to go into the Union Club, or the Manhattan, or any of the rest of them swell affairs—you can't walk in by the doorkeeper, just as you would walk into a saloon!"

"Certainly not!" Joe Phenix admitted. "You must be properly introduced by a member."

"Just so, and it is the same way with this joint," the Chicken explained.

"Of course, there isn't a man in the room who isn't a well-known crook, but they don't come to the joint to do any business—only to have a jolly, good time without the fear of a fly cop making his way into the place and snapping the bracelets on a man's wrists just when he is enjoying himself with his pals."

"Yes, I comprehend; it is a thieves' club in reality."

"That is the idea, but, as I said afore, nothing wrong goes on inside. The boys just blow in their money, and try to make believe that they are all millionaires with terrific big bank accounts."

"You have free entrance into the place?" Joe Phenix inquired.

"Oh, yes, I was one of the first of the gang to go there, and I will tell you how it was," the Chicken replied.

"It was just after my fight with the St. Joe Kid, when I had the luck to put my man to sleep in the second round."

"A couple of big crooks, bunco and green goods men, found the money to back me, and as the St. Joe rooster came here with a mighty big reputation as a fighter, and the western crowd, who came with him, had plenty of money, and were not afraid to risk it on their man, my backers won a pot of money; so after the fight—out of which I

came with hardly a scratch—my gang carried me up to this Sixth avenue joint, and there we had a royal good time."

"Lordy! I saw more wine opened that night than I ever saw before or since."

"Then you are a member in good standing of the crooks' club?"

"Oh, yes, although I have not done any crooked work since that job when you nabbed me so neatly, yet all the gang look upon me as a regular crook, and think my boxing biz is only a blind to throw the fly cops off the scent."

"I understand," Joe Phenix observed.

"So you see, governor, there isn't any use of your bothering your head about this joint!" the Chicken declared.

"Kinnie, I am inclined to be a very obstinate man when I once make up my mind," the veteran detective observed in his quiet, yet decided way.

"I think that it is advisable for me to pay a visit to this joint so I can see for myself just how the thing is run and I want you to introduce me."

"Oh, come now! I say, governor, don't ask me to do that!" the boxer cried.

"Why should I not ask you? Where is the harm?"

"The men who are running the joint are desperate coves, and if they should manage to find out that I had introduced a fly cop into the place they would be sure to get some blokes to stick a knife in me some dark night."

"I can hold my own, governor, you understand, if I have any chance for my life," he continued. "But if these coves get it in for me they will be sure to jump on me in such a way that I will not have any show," the boxer protested.

"My dear fellow, there isn't any reason why this matter should not be kept quiet," the veteran detective replied.

"I am not going to walk into the saloon in my own proper person, so that every man Jack who is in the place, and happens to be acquainted with me, can say, 'Hello! there is a shark after some one!'"

"I give you my word, governor, that it would be as much as your life is worth to go into that joint and attempt to take a man out!" the chicken declared in the most serious manner.

"I have not the slightest idea of trying any game of the kind," the detective replied.

"Why should I go to the trouble and risk my life by making an arrest in the saloon when all I have to do is to wait until my bird comes out and then nail him on the street without any trouble?"

"Yes, that is so," the boxer admitted.

"I am on the square with you in this matter," Joe Phenix declared.

"And I am telling you the truth when I say that I have no idea of attempting to make any arrests in the saloon."

"Well, I don't see as you could make anything by attempting to work the game in that way," the boxer observed.

"I am curious to see just how this crooks' club is run, and then I will admit it is my thought that if I have a chance to mingle with these 'cross coves,' in their hours of ease and idleness, possibly I can pick up some information which may be of value to me in the future."

"Oh, yes, there isn't much doubt about that," the Chicken replied.

"But, as I said afore, if the men who run the joint, or any of the crooks who patronize it, should find out that I had given the snap away by introducing you, it is a safe bet of all you are worth that they would make it particularly hot for me!" he continued in a very serious way.

"Kinnie, you ought to know me well enough to understand that I will take all possible precautions against allowing any one to catch on to the secret."

"Yes, for I'm risking my life by introducing you."

"Do not worry about that," the man-hunter replied. "I will assume a disguise which will baffle the eyes of the crooks—even the men who are best acquainted with me."

"You may rely upon my taking all possible precautions against a discovery, for I understand full well that I am risking my own life by venturing into this den."

"Oh, yes, you can bet high on that!" the

boxer declared. "For if the crooks discovered that a fly cop had got into their dive, you would be safe in putting up your bottom dollar that they would do their best to make a croaker out of you."

"I will have to risk it," Joe Phenix replied with a quiet smile.

Then he directed the boxer to wait while he assumed his disguise.

CHAPTER XXVI.

IN THE THIEVES' DEN.

THE man-hunter was only absent from the room about ten minutes, but during that time he managed to make such a complete change in his personal appearance that when he came into the room, in his noiseless way, the boxer could hardly believe that it was indeed the veteran detective who had entered.

Joe Phenix had dressed himself in a well-worn tweed suit, a dark gray check, and the clothes were cut in that peculiar shapeless way common to the average English tailor.

A short-haired wig of a reddish-brown hue completely changed the appearance of his face, for it came down low on his forehead, giving him the appearance of having beetling brows, and then there were peculiar little patches of hair which came down in front of the ears, and these made the face of the man-hunter look much broader, detracting from its length.

Joe Phenix, too, had applied a stain to his face and hands, which gave the skin a rough appearance, just as if the owner had been used to an outdoor life, exposed to wind and sun.

And, to complete the disguise, upon his head the bloodhound wore one of the little round hats so much in favor with the lower class of Englishmen, and which across the water are termed "billycock" hats.

So complete was the detective's disguise that for a moment the boxer could hardly believe that he could be this rough-looking fellow with the bulldog-like face—a man whom any prudent gentleman, who had anything of value on his person, would undoubtedly give a wide berth if encountered in a lonely street after nightfall.

"Well, may I be jiggered!" the Chicken exclaimed, in profound amazement. "If this get-up of yours don't beat anything I ever saw, I don't want a cent!"

"You think it will pass muster, then?" Joe Phenix asked.

"Pass muster!" the boxer exclaimed, "why, I will be blamed if I think your own mother would know you!"

"If my disguise is as good as that then there is not much probability that any of the crooks—even those who know me best—will be apt to recognize me," the veteran detective observed.

"Ah, no, there isn't a bit of danger that anybody will catch on!" the Chicken asserted.

"I reckon that I know you as well as anybody, and I don't believe there is a crook in New York who has got any keener eyes than mine, but I will be hanged if I would have known you, for I never saw such an alteration in any one in my life!"

"Talk about these actors in the the-a-ters, why you can double discount them when it comes to a disguise!" the boxer declared in conclusion.

"Now then to state the lay-out," the detective said. "My name is Tommy Brown—among my pals called Soft Tommy, and I am an all-around cracksman from Lunnun town."

"That is good!" the Chicken declared. "And you look it to the life too, I will say that for you!"

"You know that I am an extra good cracksman for you have been in a piece of work with me, and I cracked my crib in a manner which showed that I was a master of my business," the man-hunter explained.

"Ay, ay, I understand!" the boxer declared. "You can trust me to tell the story so that the smartest of them will swallow it down without any trouble."

"You are willing to risk my introduction with this thieves' den then?" Joe Phenix asked with a quiet smile.

"Oh, yes!" the other replied, promptly. "When I was kicking against it a while ago I had no idea that you could dish up such a

ay-out as this, but now that I have seen your get-up I am not afraid of anybody catching on to the trick.

"You look all right, and I am not worried about your patter, for I know you can talk in his own language with any crook in the country, and you are safe to go through all right so long as you don't attempt to put the collar on anybody."

"Don't be alarmed about that. I have no intention of trying any game of that kind," the man-hunter replied.

"I want to satisfy my curiosity and then I have an idea, as I said before, that I may be able to pick up some valuable information."

"I shouldn't be surprised if you did," the boxer remarked. "For as the crooks feel perfectly sure that every man in the place is on the 'cross' they don't hesitate to talk pretty freely."

"Yes, I supposed that such would be the case under the peculiar circumstances," the veteran detective observed.

"But now we had better be going, although I do not suppose there is any hurry, for from what I know of the crooks they are all of them night birds, and very much in the habit of keeping late hours."

"You are right about that!" the boxer exclaimed.

"If we should go there now—it is only a little after ten, you see," he added with a glance at the clock, "we would not be apt to find many in the place, for the crowd doesn't get in until after midnight."

"From twelve o'clock until three is the time when the joint does business," the Chicken continued.

"Yes, I understand; by that time all the crooks who have been on the watch for victims have made their hauls, and are ready to spend the money."

"Exactly; and those fellows who have not been fortunate enough to catch on to anything, come in to get a drink to brace them up, hoping to have better luck next time," the Chicken explained.

"There isn't any use of our going to the dive until about midnight, then," Joe Phenix observed.

"No, not much."

"Suppose we put in the time by making a round of the sporting-houses in the Bowery," the man-hunter suggested.

"We will be certain to encounter a number of the crooks, and from the fact of the men seeing us together on the Bowery, it will be apt to make them think it is all right when you introduce me into the Sixth avenue place."

"Yes, that is a good idea," the boxer assented.

"By the way, after we get into the Sixth avenue dive, contrive to saunter away from me, so that I will have an opportunity to scrape acquaintance with any of the men there who may seem to me to be worth talking to," the veteran detective remarked.

"Very well, I will," the Chicken replied. And then, as a sudden idea came to him, he said:

"Maybe you expect to run across certain parties in the place, whom you know something about?"

"Yes, that is very likely, for I have an extensive acquaintance among the crooks of New York," the man-hunter replied in a rather evasive way.

"I reckon that you know what you are after!" the boxer exclaimed with accents of admiration in his tones.

"As a rule I usually do," was the veteran detective's quiet reply.

"You have caught on to the fact that some crooks are in the habit of using this dive as a headquarters, and you are anxious to see what they are up to!" the boxer exclaimed with a grin.

"Well, you can rest assured that I don't visit the place for the mere purpose of passing away the time," Joe Phenix replied.

"Oh, no! from what I have seen of you I think a man would be safe in betting his last dollar that you never make a move without having a mighty good reason for it!" the Chicken declared with a knowing shake of the head.

Then the two set out, and for a couple of hours devoted themselves to the sporting houses in the Bowery, the boxer apparently acting as a guide to the other.

The peculiar appearance of the supposed Englishman excited general attention from the motley crowd who patronized the Bowery saloons, and as Mace's Chicken was a well-known pugilist, the most of the rounders jumped to the conclusion that the stranger was some English boxer who had crossed the seas to try his fortune in the New World; but the crooks whom the pair encountered, when they noted the peculiar way in which the new-comer carried himself, came to the conclusion that the man was one who had "done time," the cant term for imprisonment, in the "argot" of the criminal classes.

Shortly after midnight the pair entered the Sixth avenue place.

They passed directly through the cigar shop into the saloon, and the boxer ordered a "go" of ale.

And while the bartender was drawing the liquor the disguised detective sauntered over to the end of the room to examine a picture of a prize-fight which hung on the wall.

The bartender was an Englishman, and he had spotted the stranger for a countryman the moment he entered the saloon.

He was one of the proprietors of the dive, a bluff and burly fellow, well along in years.

"Who is that duffer over there?" the host asked, as he placed the ale on the counter.

"He is a pal of mine whom I ran across about three months ago, just after he arrived in New York."

"He is an Englishman and his face seems so familiar to me that I feel sure I must have run across him at 'ome," the Briton declared, dropping an h once in a while like a true Londoner.

"I should not be surprised if you had met him, for he is no chicken, and he tells me that he has been on the 'cross' for years," the boxer replied.

"Of course I can't exactly place the man for I have been in this country for fifteen years, and if I met him it was before I crossed the 'erring pond," the burly Briton explained.

"Ah, yes, I see. The name he travels under now is Tommy Brown, So't Tommy he says his pals always used to call him."

"Yes, yes, but names don't go, you know. Some men have a name for every town they strike," the barkeeper declared with a wise shake of the head.

"Oh, yes, I know that, but I never doubt a man's word when it comes to the name business," the boxer remarked.

"One thing is sure about this fellow, and that is he knows how to crack a crib as well as any man I ever traveled with," the Chicken said.

"Ay, ay! it take an English high toby man to do the job in style!" the Briton declared; like the majority of his countrymen he had a high opinion of his native land and its products.

"We made a good stake together and then he started on a little trip."

"To see what this 'blarsted country' was like, I suppose?"

"Yes, but he has come to the conclusion that New York is good enough for him, and now he has come back."

"All ready for a little hanky-panky business, eh?" the Englishman suggested.

"Oh, yes, of course; he says he is one of the fellows who never loses an opportunity to take a trick."

"He will find plenty of the coves down-stairs who can put him up to the time of day," the landlord suggested.

"How is he fixed—do you know?" the host continued.

"Well, he is not broke, I am sure of that," the boxer answered. "But I can't say for certain just how much money he has got; still, from the fact that he told me that he had done pretty well while he was away from New York, I judge that he has considerable cash."

"Better take him down-stairs and give him a chance to get rid of some of it," the landlord suggested, with a grin.

"I will," the Chicken replied.

The return of the supposed Englishman interrupted the conversation at this point.

The pair drank their ale, and then the host said in a genial way:

"Take your friend down-stairs and introduce him to some of the boys."

The boxer nodded assent, and the pair passed out into the entry.

CHAPTER XXVII.

ASTONISHING THE CROOKS.

As the Chicken had explained, the door in the entry was apparently nailed up, but when the boxer rapped on it in a peculiar way, first two knocks, then one, and then three in rapid succession, a small secret panel, not over three inches square, on the upper part of the door opened suddenly, and the dusky face of the brawny coal-black negro appeared in the opening.

"It is all right, Brutus," the boxer said. "You remember me, Kinnie, Mace's Chicken?"

"Yes, sah," responded the black with a grin which well displayed his ivories.

"And this friend of mine here, Mr. Tommy Brown, from London, is all right. I have introduced him to the boss, and made everything square."

"Yes, sah," again responded the black with another grin.

Then he closed the panel; there was the sound of heavy bolts moving, and then the door swung open, revealing a narrow passage, from which a flight of steps led down to another door.

A single gas-jet afforded light.

Through the passage, past the negro, and down the stairway the pair went.

"The thing is arranged so that if the police attempted to break in they would have to force their way through two doors, and that would give time for the men in the cellar to escape," the boxer explained.

"Yes, I understand. The doors are stout ones so it would take some time to force them open and there is another entrance to the underground saloon then?"

"So the proprietor told me once, but no one but the men connected with the place know where it is, and the location is kept a profound secret, for it is only to be used in the case of a police raid."

"I comprehend, and it is really an admirable scheme to keep the affair a profound secret, for if the second entrance to the saloon was generally known the police would be sure to find out all about it, and then if they came to raid the saloon all they would have to do would be to place a squad at the secret exit and so capture all who attempted to escape by that way," the disguised detective remarked.

"They thought that a dodge of that kind might be tried, and that is the reason why they keep the matter a secret."

By this time the two had arrived at the second door and as they came up to it the door opened to admit them. There were no knobs on the door, and the keen-eyed detective noticed that there were strong iron bolts on the inside of the door, worked by springs and wires.

The sentinel—the brawny negro at the head of the stairs—evidently controlled the machinery which operated the bolts.

Passing through the door the pair found themselves in a regular underground beer cellar such as are common in the metropolis.

The apartment was plainly fitted up with a bar and cooking apparatus at one end, and at the other was a passageway with a half dozen small private rooms on the sides of it, after the style of the old-fashioned "oyster-boxes," such as were once common in all oyster saloons.

Round tables, with chairs, were scattered around the room, and there were twenty-five or thirty people in the place, mostly men, but there were a few flashily-dressed women.

They were seated at the tables in groups, quite a number engaged in card playing, and nearly everybody in the place was smoking, so that the air was heavy with tobacco-smoke.

"We had better wet our whistle with another glass of ale, I suppose," the boxer remarked, after the two had got well into the apartment.

"Yes, and that will give us a chance to look around," the disguised detective responded.

No one in the room took any particular notice of the two, for, as the Chicken was well known, his advent with a stranger did not excite any surprise, particularly as the new-comer had all the appearance of being a tough customer.

As the disguised detective sipped his ale he cast an inquiring glance around, and much to

his satisfaction, discovered the two men, of whom he was in search, seated at a table in a corner of the room.

"There is a couple in the corner there whom I think I know something about," the disguised detective remarked, nodding in the direction of the two men who were playing cards, and so much interested in their game that they had not noticed the entrance of the new-comers.

The Chicken took a look at the pair.

"I do not know either of them," he said. "And I don't remember to have ever seen them here before, still, they may be regular patrons for all I know, for I don't come here very often, but once in a while I have to in order to see the sporting crook who backs me when I get a chance to make a good match."

"Then the boxer happened to look to the further end of the room, and there caught sight of the man of whom he was speaking.

"There is the cove now a-beckoning to me," the Chicken continued. "And I s'pose I had better see what he wants."

"Go ahead! and I will see what I can do with my men over yonder," the disguised detective replied.

Then the pair finished their ale and separated, the boxer going toward where his backer sat, while Joe Phenix went up to the table where Professor Solomon Magilton and Martin Hitchcraft were busy at cards.

The disguised detective helped himself to a chair, and as the card-players looked up to see who it was he grinned at them in a good-natured way.

The card-players looked at the new-comer, and then gazed at each other in an inquiring fashion, for the rough-looking customer was certainly acting like a man who thought he knew them.

After the men had exchanged glances, and then directed their attention to the new-comer again the disguised detective exclaimed:

"Well, gents, you can bet your life that this is the biggest kind of a surprise party!"

"Eh?" said the professor, astonished by this remark.

"Yes, gents, it is a first-class surprise party, and no mistake!" the Englishman repeated.

In order to prevent confusion we will speak in future of the disguised detective as though he really was the man he pretended to be.

"Really, I don't understand what you mean," the professor replied.

"Why, gents, you are the last two men whom I expected to see in a dive of this kind!" the Londoner declared.

"I don't see why our presence here should affect you in the least," the professor observed.

"You are a stranger and you cannot possibly know anything about us."

The Englishman laughed, then he closed one eye, and winked with the other at the pair in an extremely peculiar way.

"Why, gents, I am a Londoner, I am, and I can see as far into a millstone as the next man."

"I am no fool, you know, and my pals have always had the opinion that I was a mighty clever man, and so it isn't at all wonderful that when I meet you two in a place like this I should be able to tell pretty well what game you are up to!" the Englishman explained.

"Oh, yes, that is all reasonable enough, but why should you single us out?" the professor asked.

"There are plenty of other people in the room, so why should you address your conversation to us?" Magilton continued.

"Well, I s'pose it does seem rather strange to you," the Englishman remarked in a reflective way.

"But you see, when I saw you here I was so astonished that I never stopped to think that you didn't know me from Adam."

"Yes, but you don't know anything about us!" the professor exclaimed.

"Oh, but I do, and that is where you are away out!" the Englishman rejoined.

"But, as I said, you don't know anything about me, so I s'pose I had better introduce myself."

"My name is Brown—Tommy Brown—Soft Tommy my pals usually call me, on account of the gentle trick I have of laying my man out with a 'life preserver,' if any bloke presumes to dare to interfere with me when I am engaged in cracking his crib."

"You see, gents, I am a regular high toby cracksman; I learned my business with some of the best men in the profession, and though I say it who shouldn't, I don't take a back seat for any man in my line, for, gents, you must understand, I commenced right at the beginning, and I learned the trade right from keeping the watch on the outside, to pipe off the police, or taking a survey of the grounds in advance in order to see whether the crib was worth cracking or not, to using the 'jimmy,' the brace and bit, or the blow-pipe to rip open the strong-box."

"You evidently understand the business," the professor remarked with an approving nod.

"Oh, yes, it is just as I say. I understand it from A to Ampersand!" the Englishman declared.

"But this don't explain how it is that you know anything about us," the professor urged.

"Why, bless your heart, I have been spying around your crib up-town for the past week, a-trying to make up my mind whether it would be worth while for me to attempt to crack it or not," the Englishman declared.

The pair were annoyed by this statement, and their surprise was plainly visible in their faces.

"Oh, it is the truth, and you need not stare!" the Londoner exclaimed.

"That is the way I have done business since I came to this blooming country."

"There isn't any particular gang here with whom I can work, as I used to do at home, so I just spy around on my own hook until I find a crib which I think is worth cracking, and after I have got all the points, I drop in to some place like this where I will be apt to pick up a couple of fellows to help me do the job."

"Ah, yes, I see," the professor remarked.

"I spotted the doctor's house as being one which would be well-worth cracking, and, as I said, for a week now I have been trying to see which would be the easiest way to do the job."

"It is a hard crib to get at, and from that fact I got the idea that if I could crack it I would make a good haul; these retired doctors too, generally have a deal of coin in the strong-box."

"And now that I have made this explanation do you wonder that I was mightily surprised at see you two men here?"

"No, I certainly do not," the professor replied.

"It would have been very strange if you had not been," Hitchcraft observed.

"But I say, pals, is the doctor on the cross then?" the Englishman asked.

"If he is, I must say that he is the most deceiving bloke I ever met."

"Oh, no, he is square enough," the professor replied. "But he is a little weak in the upper story about some things, although as far as money goes he is shrewd enough, but there isn't any wealth to be gained by cracking the doctor's crib, for he doesn't keep any money in the house, don't possess any jewelry, and his silver is all plated stuff and no Jew 'fence' would be willing to give a five dollar note for the whole lot."

"I am mighty glad I met you then if the crib isn't worth cracking, for I always hate to waste my time."

"But I say, you two were lucky to get such snug berths as you have at the doctor's," the Englishman continued.

"Oh, yes, I happened to make the doctor's acquaintance on a railway train, and I soon discovered that he was a little cracked on the subject of perpetual motion, and as I had a fling at that when I was serving my apprenticeship in a machine shop I was able to give him some points, and soon succeeded in impressing him with the idea that I was a great mechanical genius," the professor explained.

"I thought there was a chance for me to obtain a soft berth and so I went in for it," he continued with a chuckle.

"Right you were!" the cracksman exclaimed.

"Then I got a chance to work my friend here, who is an old pal of mine, into the house, and so both of us have a pretty good thing of it."

"And I s'pose that if you see a good chance to take a trick you will not let it go by?" the Englishman observed, with a grin.

"That is correct!" the professor declared.

"We always try to keep up to the time of day."

"But this here talking is dry work!" the Londoner exclaimed, abruptly.

"Will you have a go of something?"

The others said they did not mind.

"What do you say to our good old English drink—a little brandy and soda?" the Londoner inquired.

"I am feeling flush to-night, and I don't mind standing Sam!"

"I am agreeable," the professor replied.

"Brandy and soda will go very well," Hitchcraft admitted.

And so the Englishman hailed the waiter, and soon the drinks were on the table.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A PROPOSITION.

"HERE is to our better acquaintance, gents!" the Englishman exclaimed.

The others nodded assent, and then they all took a good swig of the potent liquor.

"It is always my custom to keep my eyes wide open whenever I take my walks abroad," the Londoner continued.

"A good idea," the professor assented.

"And so it happens that I have spotted another house in your neighborhood which I think might be worth looking after."

"Is that so?" the professor asked, both he and his companion becoming immediately interested.

"Yes, and I don't doubt you can tell me something about the party—it is this brewer, Shubaugh," the Englishman explained.

"The man is worth money enough, there is no doubt about that," the professor observed, in a thoughtful way.

"I have contrived to get on good terms with the gardener and the hostler," the Englishman asserted. "And, from what they say, it seems as if two or three coves like us could make a good thing of it if we did the trick all right."

Both of the others had become very much interested by this time.

The professor cast a quick glance around as though he wished to be sure there wasn't any one near enough to overhear the conversation.

The Englishman noticed the look and understanding what was passing in the mind of the other said:

"Oh, it is all right! I always keep my peepers open, and I saw that nobody could hear what I said before I started in to explain about this little scheme."

"That was prudent of you, of course, but a man can't be too careful about how he talks business in a public place like this," the professor replied.

"Right you are for money, old pal!" the Londoner exclaimed. "And you can bet all you are worth that I am not the kind of man to give anything away by acting foolishly."

"Oh, no, I know my business too well, and I am too old a hand to make a mistake of that kind," he continued. "But as we have got this corner all to ourselves we need not fear to speak freely."

"To my thinking, you know, this little scheme offers a chance to rake in some big money without much risk."

"Well, I am not in a position to judge in regard to that, for I am not sufficiently informed about the circumstances," the professor observed.

"If the trick could be worked all right it seems to me that it ought to pan out well," Hitchcraft remarked.

"Pals, I don't think there is a doubt about it!" the Englishman declared in a very positive way.

"I always make it a rule to go over the ground carefully in advance, for it is my opinion that a game of this kind well-laid out is half-played."

The others assented to this.

"Now then the first question that I always ask, when I commence an investigation of this kind is, will the crib pay for cracking?"

"Well, I don't think there is much doubt about that, for Shubaugh is a man of great wealth—worth two or three million, it is reported," the professor said.

"Yes, pals, it looks as if that was a good argument, but it don't amount to anything!" the Englishman declared.

"It isn't, you must understand, how much a man is worth, but whether he keeps his wealth in a portable shape in the house so that gentlemen in my line of business can get at it," the cracksman explained.

"Yes, I comprehend," the professor observed. "And I should say there was a chance to do a stroke of business, for I know that Shubaugh has some splendid diamonds, and other jewelry; then, too, he has the reputation of always carrying a large amount of money with him."

"Exactly, and that is the truth, too, and then he has a service of plate worth a good five thousand dollars—none of your cheap stuff, you understand, but the good solid article, and no mistake!"

"Yes, but isn't it difficult to get rid of valuables of that description?" the professor asked.

"Oh, no, not if you know where to go," the Londoner replied.

"The 'fence' that I do business with keeps a pawnbroker's shop, but that is only a blind, you know, and when I run any plate or stuff of that description in to him, he slaps it into the melting-pot immediately, so there isn't any danger of the articles being traced."

"That is a good idea!" the professor exclaimed.

"Yes, sir, in fifteen or twenty minutes after I turn in the swag, and collar the cash, all the fly cops in New York could search the place and they wouldn't find the stuff," the Englishman explained.

"The same game he plays with diamonds," he continued. "The moment the sparklers are delivered he knocks them out of the settings, then away to the melting pot goes the gold while the diamonds are put with the rest of his precious stones, and after this game is worked it would be a smart man who could swear to his property."

"This gentleman evidently understands his business," the professor observed.

"Oh, yes, no doubt about that," Hitchcraft assented. "But I say, is he willing to give anything like a fair price for the swag? The most of these fences don't want to give but a tenth part of what the boodle is worth."

"Ah, this man is willing to do the fair thing," the Englishman responded.

"Of course, it isn't to be expected that he will give anything like the full value, you know, for he has got to make a good profit on account of the risks which he runs."

"That is only reasonable," the professor remarked.

"Take a lot of plate like this lot we were speaking about; say it cost five thousand dollars, and as old silver would be worth two thousand, maybe; well, my man will give a clean thousand for it, and that is what I call doing the fair thing," the cracksman observed.

"Oh, yes, it seems to me that that is about right," the professor assented.

"Now, I spotted your crib and this Shubaugh house as being two likely places for a man to pick up some swag," the Englishman explained.

"But your place was a tough one, as there is only you two and the woman in the house, therefore there wasn't any chance for me to get on friendly terms with any of you so as to be able to pick up a bit of information, but at the Shubaugh crib it was all plain sailing."

"Yes, for the man keeps about a dozen servants, and among so many there must be one or two inclined to be leaky," the professor observed.

"Exactly! you never said a truer thing in your life!" the cracksman declared.

"And, as I told you, I am hail-fellow-well-met with a couple of the people," he continued.

"Maybe you would not think it to look at me, but I am quite a charmer when it comes to the patter," he added, with a grin.

"Well, it seems to me that you are a pretty good talker," the professor remarked.

"Oh, yes, I know I am a rather tough-looking chap to gaze upon, but when it comes to patter I have got a tongue which will hold its own with any song-bird in the country!" the cracksman asserted in a boastful way.

"You see, when it comes to dealing with chaps like this gardener and hostler, I know just how to take 'em."

"I was with a racing-stable in England for a matter of ten years, and what I don't know about horses isn't worth knowing."

"Ah, yes, I see," the professor remarked with a wise shake of the head. "All these fellows are interested in horses, and when you tackle them in that way you get on their weak side."

"Right as ninepence, old pal!" the Londoner exclaimed. "You have got it down fine! as you Americans say. But though I have managed to get on a mighty friendly footing with this pair, that I was telling you about, and have contrived to pick up considerable information, yet neither one of them is the right party to give me the particulars that I ought to have in regard to the inside of the house."

"Ah, yes, I understand," the professor observed with a sagacious nod.

"You ought to get hold of the butler, or some body holding a position inside of the house."

"That is it! you have hit it as straight as a die!" the cracksman declared.

"If you could manage to get on friendly terms with a man of that kind, and he would allow you to pump him, you could get some important information in regard to what valuables were in the house, and find out just where they were kept."

"Ah, I am trying for better game than the butler!" the Englishman declared with a knowing air.

"Is that so?" the professor inquired, deeply interested.

"Yes, I am laying the wires to become a pal of Shubaugh's own man, his valet, you understand."

"Oho! if you can work a game of that kind you will be able to get all the information you want without any trouble!" the professor declared.

"Yes, yes, and that is the little hanky-panky game I am trying to work," the cracksman responded.

"I will tell you just how it is," he continued. "This 'ere valet has lately got in the habit of playing the races—young Shubaugh himself, you see, is quite a sport, and as the fellow has been used to going with his master to the tracks that is how he came to go in to pick out the winner."

"And that is just exactly what he does not succeed in doing, I suppose," the professor remarked.

"Correct! he plays the game that ninety men out of a hundred drop their cash on," the Englishman replied.

"What do you suppose race-tracks are for, anyway—to provide swag for a lot of duffers who haven't sense enough to go in when it rains? Oh, no, not much!"

"That is true. If pigeons will attempt to compete with hawks they must expect to be eaten," the professor observed with the air of a philosopher.

"Shubaugh can lose a few hundred and not feel it; but when the valet drops fifty it makes him feel sore."

"The hostler has already told him that I am up to a thing or two about horses, and he is to meet me to-morrow night for the purpose of getting some tips."

"Now then, if you care to go in with me, I will pump him about the valuables, and I don't doubt that we can make a good thing by cracking the crib."

The others agreed that there seemed to be a good opening for business, and it was arranged that the Englishman was to come to the doctor's house after he had had his talk with the valet.

Then more brandy and soda was ordered and the trio drank to the success of their scheme.

The disguised man-hunter had certainly made a good beginning.

CHAPTER XXIX.

SHUBAUGH SHOWS FIGHT.

WHEN the speculator, the genial George Jingo, had, after the fashion of a prudent general, made all his arrangements for an advance in force, he wrote to Shubaugh, saying that he was in a position to show him just how strong a case Lemuel Shubaugh had, and suggested that he would like to have an interview with him in the presence of his, Shubaugh's, lawyer, or lawyers, for the purpose of discussing the matter.

An answer was promptly returned, in which Shubaugh said that although both he and his counsel were perfectly satisfied that there wasn't anything in the claim that Lemuel Shubaugh had set forward, yet on account of the esteem which he, Shubaugh, had for him, the general, he would be pleased to see him, and hear what he had to say.

And this was no mere idle compliment either, for the young brewer really had taken a great liking for the old sporting man, and it was one of the great desires of his heart to get the general to take charge of a racing stable which he wanted to set up in emulation of some other of the gilded New York youths, fellows with more money than brains, who were anxious to flourish as great guns on the "turf."

Jingo read the letter to the sick man and Lemuel Shubaugh's lip curled in contempt.

"Taffy! that is what it is! nothing but taffy!" he declared. "What does he care for you? Why should he care anything?"

"Oh, well, I am not saying that he does," the general replied in his cool, careless way.

"And I am quite sure that it does not make any difference to me whether he does or not," he continued.

"But I have accomplished what I set out to do. He consents to give me an interview, and so I consider that I have gained a point."

"I am very doubtful about it," the sick man grumbled.

"If I had my way I would not have bothered with any interview. I would have set the lawyers to work and brought suit immediately."

"Well, now, there isn't any use of your wasting your breath in talking about this matter," the speculator rejoined. "We have gone over it once already, and I don't propose to go over it again."

"You are not going to have your way, and the affair is to be carried out on the lines that I laid down."

Shubaugh grumbled a little, but as he knew the speculator meant what he said, he did not attempt by argument to turn him from his path, but he declared that he thought he ought to be present at the meeting.

"Oh, no, I don't think that would be wise at all!" the speculator declared. "For you look so under the weather that the parties on the other side might take it into their heads that you were liable to die at any moment, and so refuse to come to any arrangement."

"I may live to see you buried!" the sick man retorted, angrily.

"Well, as far as I am concerned, I hope you will; I haven't any objection," the general remarked, with a laugh.

"I will tell you what you can do," he continued, as an idea occurred to him. "I will get an open carriage, and you can take a ride with me up to the neighborhood of the house, then remain in the carriage while I talk with the parties."

"The chances are that the trip will do you good."

And the matter was arranged in this way. At the appointed time the general got a carriage, and the two set out.

Upon arriving in the neighborhood of the Shubaugh mansion, the general had the carriage halt, then he got out and proceeded the rest of the way on foot.

And as fate would have it, the carriage halted on the corner of the cross-road which led to old Doctor Hunnawalt's mysterious mansion, and from this circumstance an unexpected result was destined to ensue, as the reader will see anon.

The general found young Shubaugh and his lawyer waiting for him.

And when the millionaire introduced the lawyer as Judge Brady, the speculator understood that he was, in sporting phraseology, "going up" against one of the leading lawyers in the metropolis.

The general though was a true sport, and game to the back-bone, so he proceeded to explain his case with as much calmness and deliberation as though the legal gentleman was a briefless youngster, who had yet to win his spurs in the lists of law.

The judge took notes as the speculator related the particulars upon which he relied to prove that Lemuel Shubaugh was really the heir to all his father's property.

Neither the lawyer or the young man interrupted the general with any questions during the recital, but when he came to the end Shubaugh said:

"Well, general, I will say to you frankly, that I do not wonder at your thinking you have a strong case, for it certainly does present that appearance, eh, judge?"

The lawyer hummed and hawed, then assumed a grave look.

"Well, really, it is one of those peculiar affairs upon which it is hard to express an opinion until there is a chance to get at the actual facts before a regular legal tribunal," he remarked.

"This is an ex-parte statement, and so it is difficult to come to a correct opinion," he continued.

"But on the face of it the general has certainly made out a strong case," Shubaugh observed.

"Oh, yes, but, my dear sirs, you must take into consideration that this is one of the affairs where everything depends upon the amount of credit which must be given to the statements of the witnesses," the old gentleman remarked.

"These common-law marriages are extremely ugly things to handle," he continued.

"If I had known anything of the facts of the case I would certainly have advised your father, whose legal adviser I had the honor of being for a long term of years, that it was most important for him to make a will so that there would not be any doubt in regard to the disposition of his property."

"I always supposed that he had made a will until after his death," the young man remarked.

"A great many men are peculiar in that respect," the lawyer explained. "They are always going to make a will, but, somehow, neglect to do it until it is too late."

"My father's case exactly," Shubaugh observed.

"Now then, if these witnesses, who are willing to come forward and swear that over thirty years ago Jacob Shubaugh lived with this Bridgeport woman in New York, and publicly acknowledged her as his wife, are all right—if their testimony cannot be upset—then the case is a strong one."

"Yes, of course, there is no mistake about that; it all depends upon these witnesses," Shubaugh admitted.

"Well, gentlemen, I will say to you, in the frankest manner, that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, they are all right!" the general declared.

"Ah, yes, my dear sir, I do not doubt that you are perfectly sincere and honest in that declaration," the old lawyer remarked. "And I trust that you will pardon me for saying that it is not possible for a man, no matter how great his abilities, or his experience, to decide in regard to a matter of this kind; it is clearly impossible in my opinion for a man to form a correct opinion."

"And I am not going so far as to assume either that the witnesses are rascals who come upon the stand for the express purpose of swearing to what they know to be untrue, for often an honest witness, who could not be induced to swear to a lie, will, through a mistake, testify to what is absolutely false."

"Oh, yes, I can understand how a thing of that kind can occur," the general admitted.

"Mr. Shubaugh informed me that it was your idea that a compromise might be arranged," the judge remarked.

"Yes, I had a notion of that kind," the speculator observed.

"The estate is a big one, and if it were cut in half, then each half would amount to about as much money as a man ought to have," Jingo continued.

"And it was my impression that if I could show to the satisfaction of this gentleman's legal adviser—and he bowed to the judge—"that the party whom I represent had a good case, the affair might be settled without going into court."

"I don't know what the judge is going to say about this matter, for I have not had any talk with him on the subject!" Shubaugh remarked in an abrupt way. "But it is my opinion that I ought to fight, and it will be time enough to talk of a compromise when it looks as if I was going to get the worst of it."

"Ah, yes, but when matters begin to present that appearance, the chances are big that my side will not want to compromise," the old sport observed, with a smile.

"That is very true," Shubaugh admitted. "And you must not think I was such an idiot as not to take that into consideration, for I did, but it is my opinion that I ought to fight."

"Decidedly!" cried the old lawyer, as the young man looked to him at the close of the speech.

"Under the circumstances there is no other course open to Mr. Shubaugh," he continued. "After you develop your case, if your witnesses stand the test of a cross-examination, then it will be time to talk of a compromise."

"Oh, no, if we ever get as far as that, it will be a fight to a finish as far as my side is concerned!" the general declared as he rose to depart.

"I will have to risk it—ta, ta, old man!" Shubaugh exclaimed.

"I might have known that no lawyer would advise a compromise," Jingo remarked to himself as he departed. "No fight, no fees! and these legal sharks look out for themselves, every time!"

CHAPTER XXX.

FATE INTERFERES.

WHEN the general got back to the carriage he found that the sick man had his eyes closed, and looked as if he was sleeping.

"Hello, taking a nap?" he said.

"No, but I feel a little faint," Lemuel replied. "I suppose it is the effects of the drive. I am not so strong as I thought I was."

"I had an idea that the trip would do you good," the general remarked, a little uneasy in his mind in regard to the sick man, for there was a look upon his face which he did not like.

"Oh, it is only a momentary faintness," the other remarked.

"I will feel better in a little while, probably," he added.

"Well, I certainly hope so, but I am rather sorry that you came, for I am afraid that you are not strong enough to bear the fatigue," the old sport remarked.

"Oh, no, I think it is much better for me to come. I am anxious to know about the matter, and if I had remained behind I would simply have fretted and worried."

"How did you make out?" the sick man asked, eagerly.

"I did not succeed in coming to any agreement, and we shall have to fight them in the courts."

"What?" exclaimed Lemuel, angrily, "you don't mean to say that they will dare to fight?"

"Yes, that is exactly what they are going to do!"

"They would not listen to your story then—would not examine your proofs?" the sick man exclaimed, in a great state of excitement.

"Oh, yes, they listened in the most patient manner; but the old lawyer, who has charge of the legal business, advised against a compromise, and, in fact, the young man himself was opposed to it."

"You see, they are going on the old legal adage that possession is nine points of the law. They have got the money, and are prepared to spend a big amount of it to enable them to hold on to the estate."

"Yes, curse them!" the sick man cried, angrily. "They are going to use the money which really belongs to me to keep me from getting my rights!"

"The miserable scoundrels! If I was only a well man I would take a knife and soon settle matters with this rascal, who is enjoying my property, curse him, curse him!"

And the sick man fairly shrieked the malediction.

"Hold on! don't go on in that way!" the general exclaimed. "You will raise the neighborhood!"

Shubaugh had half risen, every nerve in his body quivering with excitement, and then, with a low moan, he sunk backward on the seat, his face deathly pale.

It was a coach with a movable top, which was now down, that the general had hired, and during this conversation he had been standing by the side, with his arm resting upon the carriage body, and now that Shubaugh fell back, apparently fainting, he opened the door and hastened to enter the carriage in order to attend to him.

The driver, an intelligent young Irishman, was alarmed by the hoarse moan which came from the lips of the stricken man, and he cried out:

"Shure, the gentleman is dying! It's a doctor that's wanted. Oh, where will we find a doctor?"

The exclamation attracted the attention of a gentleman, who was coming up the road, by the corner of which the carriage stood, and he at once hastened to the vehicle.

"I am a doctor—can I be of any service?" he exclaimed as he reached the side of the carriage.

It was the occupant of the mysterious mansion, the man who called himself Doctor Hannawalt.

"My friend here has a very serious attack I fear," the old sport exclaimed, raising the senseless man in his arms.

The old doctor started in surprise when he got a good look at the sick man's features.

"Great heavens! it is Lemuel Shubaugh!" he exclaimed.

"Ah, do you know him?" the general asked, rather surprised by the strange circumstance.

The first moments of astonishment being passed the old doctor speedily recovered his composure.

"Oh, yes, I met the gentleman some years ago, and as I have never happened to encounter him since, I was naturally amazed at being thus unexpectedly brought face-to-face with him," the old fellow explained.

"I am very much afraid that he is going to have a mighty bad attack," the general remarked, as he gazed into the pale face of Shubaugh.

The doctor shook his head, and then put his finger on the pulse of the senseless man, while the general watched him earnestly.

Then a long breath came from the old man's lips, and again he shook his head.

"Is he a goner, doctor?" the old sport questioned, anticipating the worst.

"Yes, sir, the man is dead!"

And it was the truth. The spell of anger which had seized upon him had snapped his feeble thread of life in twain.

"Well, that settles this speculation," the veteran sport muttered under his breath, as he carefully laid the dead man back on his seat.

"I do not suppose that I can be of any further service to you," the old doctor asked, and the general, who was a careful, observing man, noticed that he seemed strangely excited, and he wondered at it, for there wasn't anything in even so sudden a death as this was to agitate an old medical man.

"No, I think not, thank you," the sport replied.

"I do not suppose there is any doubt that the man is really dead?" the general continued.

"He is not in a faint or a trance or anything of that kind?"

"Oh, no, sir; there is no doubt that he has passed away," the doctor replied, decidedly.

"I judge from his appearance that he has been sick for some time and it is not strange that in a case of this kind death should come quickly and without warning."

"I am much obliged!" the general declared.

"Don't mention it! I am happy at being able to be of assistance in a sad case of this kind."

And then with a bow the old doctor turned about, retracing his steps down the road.

The general put up the top of the carriage, so as to shield the dead man, whom he carefully adjusted in the corner of the vehicle, and then instructed the driver to return to his house.

"Well, I am out a few dollars," the sport murmured after the carriage got well in motion. "But I don't grudge the money though, for if the scheme had gone through all right I would have won a big stake, and without any great struggle, or risk on my part."

"Jake Shubaugh will keep his father's millions certain, for as his half-brother has passed in his checks there isn't any one to dispute the possession of the estate with him."

"He will have the grand laugh on me, but though I count myself a good player, yet when death takes a hand in the game he always wins."

The old sport was a philosopher.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE DOCTOR'S SCHEME.

HUNNAWALT turned toward his home at a good rate of speed; his mind was teeming with busy thoughts and his legs took their cue from his brain.

As he entered through the iron gate the professor who was looking through one of the windows on the second floor, to the right of the entrance, caught sight of him.

The professor sat by the window, smoking a pipe, comfortably seated in a rocking-chair.

The room wherein he sat was the doctor's workshop, and it was well-filled with all sorts of curious machines, with springs and cog-wheels, and clock-work contrivances.

In this apartment the professor was supposed to put in some five or six hours of his valuable time daily, working on a machine which was designed to solve the problem of perpetual motion, that ancient chimera which has puzzled the brains of so many men since the days when the search for the philosopher's stone—that fabulous thing which was to possess the power of turning lead and the baser metals into gold—ceased, and the credulous mortals, who were not happy until they were chasing some Will-o'-the-Wisp, stopped in that wild-goose chase and set out to discover the secret of perpetual motion, which was to produce mechanical power at so slight a cost as to revolutionize the industrial world.

The doctor in his old age had taken up this hobby, and the professor was the expert workman who was to put the old man's visionary ideas into shape, and reduce them to a working possibility.

The professor was a tolerably clever mechanic, but a great humbug.

He knew perfectly well that all the doctor's ideas on the subject were worthless, but by skillfully suggesting little changes here and there, he succeeded in getting up models of machines which would run for a while, but there was always some defect which the wily professor declared could undoubtedly be fixed, and then the great problem of perpetual motion would be solved.

When the doctor was out of the way the wily professor did not do any work to amount to anything.

His principal occupation being to sit by the window in the rocking-chair, smoke pipes and read novels.

But he kept a good look-out for the doctor though, and so whenever the old gentleman made his appearance in the work-shop he always found the professor hard at work at the models, therefore he had got the idea that he was not only a great natural mechanic, but a remarkably industrious man.

And on this occasion when the doctor reached

the work-shop he found the professor busy with a file adjusting a couple of cog-wheels.

The old fellow was all out of breath on account of the haste with which he had come, and the professor looked at him in surprise as he plumped down in the rocking-chair, got out his handkerchief, and began to mop his face with it.

"You appear to be heated, doctor?" the professor remarked.

"Yes, and I have good reason to be," the doctor replied.

"What has happened?"

"You remember that we were speaking the other day about Lemuel Shubaugh?"

"Oh, yes."

"And we were speculating whether he was alive or dead?"

"Yes, and we came to the conclusion that he must be dead."

"Then the stranger came here seeking to gain some information from me in regard to Shubaugh's birth."

"Yes, and we altered our minds and came to the opinion that he must be alive or else this man would not be interested in getting at the facts which he appeared to be so anxious to learn."

"Exactly! Well, professor, our thought was correct—Lemuel Shubaugh was alive!"

"Is it possible?"

"Yes, for I have just seen him!"

"What a strange coincidence!"

"Oh, yes; he was seated in an open carriage which had halted at the junction of our road and the main avenue."

"Do you suppose he was in search of you?" the professor asked.

"I do not know; I cannot form an opinion on that point, but I recognized him the moment my eyes fell upon his face."

"And he—did he recognize you?" the professor asked, eagerly.

"No, for he was not in a condition to recognize anybody," the doctor explained.

And then he related all the particulars of the affair.

"He is dead, then?" the professor remarked, in a slow and reflective way, when the doctor finished the recital.

"Yes, he was probably dead before I arrived at his side."

"Well, he will not trouble anybody any more," the professor remarked.

"It is something of a weight removed from my mind," the doctor observed, thoughtfully.

"Oh, yes—undoubtedly."

"Not, really, you understand, because I desired the death of the man."

"No, no, certainly not!"

"But I always had the fear, you know, that if I proceeded to carry out my plans, at the last moment—the very eleventh hour, as one might say, he would make his appearance and spoil everything."

"I do not wonder at your being disturbed about the matter, because, of course, while the man was alive there was always danger that he might make his appearance."

"The French, you know, have a very wise saying which covers the ground, that is, 'It is the unexpected which always happens.'"

"Yes, yes, and how very true the adage is, too."

"Well, you will not have that thought to worry you any longer."

"No, the man's account with this world is closed, and now I suppose the quicker I set to work to carry out my scheme the better!"

"Oh, yes, if I were you I would not lose any time."

"I have hesitated to proceed on account of the fear I had that Lemuel Shubaugh would come forward after I had everything nicely arranged, and so reap the benefit of my endeavors," the doctor explained.

"No fear of anything of that kind happening now!" the professor declared.

"Exactly, my mind is easy, and I will proceed to carry out my scheme."

"Well, do you think the girl will consent all right?" the other asked, in a way which seemed to imply that he had considerable doubt about the matter.

"Oh, yes, there will not be any trouble about that!" the doctor declared, in the most confident way.

"She has a great deal of affection for me, which is only natural under the circumstances, and when she finds out what I desire I feel sure she will only be too glad to comply with my wishes."

"Well, it will certainly not take you long to find out about the matter," the professor observed.

"I hope that you are correct in your assumption, but my experience of women has taught me that they are very unreliable and cannot be depended upon," he continued.

"Oftentimes when a man thinks that they are sure to act in such and such a way they will do directly contrary."

"Yes, I know that sometimes the members of the fair sex are very fickle-minded, the doctor admitted. "But in this case I feel pretty certain that everything will be all right."

"Well, I hope so," the professor remarked,

evidently not reassured by the confident words of the doctor.

"And now that the coast is clear I would advise that you ascertain just what her ideas are in regard to the matter," he urged.

"I will do so, and immediately!" the doctor declared rising as he spoke.

"It is advisable to act promptly, to my thinking," the professor observed.

"The death of Shubaugh removes the only obstacle there was in the way. Now there is clear sailing, and you certainly ought to be able to carry the scheme through successfully."

"Yes, so it seems to me."

"All I fear is that you may find the girl to be obstinate," the professor affirmed. "If she had any idea of the true state of affairs I should be very much afraid that she would not consent to marry you."

"Ah, true, but she has no knowledge whatever of the matter!" the doctor declared in a decided way.

"Why, my dear fellow, for a good fifteen years now, ever since her mother's death, I have had this scheme in my mind and have been bending all my efforts to make a success out of it."

"Right at the beginning, just as soon as I got hold of the private papers of the matter and comprehended the true facts of the case, I conceived the idea of taking charge of the girl, bringing her up until she grew old enough to enter into the wedded state and then marrying her."

"It was a great idea!" the professor declared.

"The only obstacle in the way of carrying out the scheme was Lemuel Shubaugh," the old gentleman explained.

"He was a sailor, a rover up and down the earth; no one knew for certain whether he was alive or dead. He might appear at any moment, and then again it was possible that accident had befallen him and he was at the bottom of the sea."

"Ah, yes, but such men are always turning up when they are least expected."

"That is very true, and Lemuel Shubaugh did make his appearance at last," the doctor remarked.

"But now he has gone to his long account, and there is no doubt about the matter, for I saw his lifeless body with my own eyes, and therefore I am free to go ahead."

"I would not lose any time," the professor advised.

"You are right. I will see Constance immediately." And then the doctor took his departure.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE GIRL.

THE doctor's house was one of those irregular, old-fashioned mansions, dating back a hundred years or so, which are still to be found along the banks of the noble Hudson.

Originally it had been a square house, with a peculiar, odd-shaped cupola crowning the roof, then an owner had added a wing on one side; another man, thinking the house did not look well with one wing, added a second to balance the first.

A third man built an extension in the rear, and so, take it altogether, the mansion was a decidedly conglomerated affair.

The doctor did not use the rear extension, and it was closed.

One peculiarity about this extension was the fact that it was about as big as the average cottage house, and had a little garden of its own, fenced in by a stout wall from the rest of the grounds.

There was no gate in the fence and access to the grounds could only be had by way of the house.

There was a main entry through the center of the house, and by means of this entry the doctor proceeded to the rear extension.

As we have said, the house was an ancient one, built long before these "days of shoddy," and everything about the building was of the most solid nature, the walls eight and ten inches thick, and the doors so strong that they could bid defiance to an assault with anything less feeble than a crow-bar.

The door which led from the main building into the extension was guarded by a stout lock, and it was necessary for the doctor to use a key to gain admission.

After passing through the door the doctor found himself in a small ante-room, and there was another solid door, with a massive spring lock upon it, which the doctor had to unlock before he could gain admission to the main room of the extension.

After going through this door the doctor found himself in a snugly furnished sitting-room, and there, in an easy-chair, sat a girl of sixteen, but she was extremely well developed for her age, and looked to be older than she was.

In person she was about the medium height, a pretty girl, with regular features, luxuriant blonde hair and bright blue eyes.

She was amusing herself with some fancy work as the doctor entered, and, looking up as he made his appearance, greeted him with a pleasant smile in which though there was much sadness.

"Well, how do you find yourself to-day, Constance?" the old gentleman asked as he helped himself to a chair which he drew up close to the maiden's side.

"Oh, I am about the same as usual, well enough, I suppose, but dreadfully lonesome."

"Why, you really ought not to be; you have your books, your music, all sorts of fancy work, and you can amuse yourself by walking in the garden whenever you like," the doctor replied.

"Oh, yes, I know, but that isn't like having my liberty, and being allowed to come and go just as I please," the girl complained.

"Ah, well, my dear child you must take into consideration that if you had your parents and were living under their protection you would not be allowed to do as you liked," the old gentleman argued.

"Your father would be likely to put certain restrictions upon you, and your mother most certainly would do so," he continued.

"Oh, yes, I suppose that is true, but even if I had my liberty I wouldn't like to stay here, for this place is just like a prison!" the girl declared with a doleful look around.

And this was certainly the case.

There were two windows in the room, both on the same side and looking out on the garden which appertained to the rear exterior.

They were ordinary windows, but over each half casement was a fine wire screen, which did not prevent the windows from moving up or down, but kept any one from getting at the glass, and there was a couple of staples and a padlock, so the windows could be fastened, making it impossible for any one to open them.

"Well, I did not enter into any explanations about the matter before, except to tell you that every thing you see here was just as it is now when I took the house," the doctor observed.

"I rented it all furnished, you comprehend?"

"Yes, I remember; you told me that when I came a month ago."

"The fact of the matter is, this house was owned by a doctor who kept a sort of a private 'retreat' here, as they term such institutions in France, and this rear extension was especially fitted up for the accommodation of patients who were inclined to be a little violent."

"Oh, yes, I understand," the girl observed. "Poor creatures who were out of their minds."

"Yes, exactly," the doctor assented. "Of course, under the circumstances, I did not care to change the fittings of the house in any way, and so I allowed things to remain just as they were."

"And then too, these bolts and bars made it impossible for me to run away if I had taken such a notion into my head," the girl remarked with a sad smile.

"Ah, my dear child, I never thought of such a thing upon my honor!" the old doctor declared.

"Have I not been your guardian—your protector, ever since you were a baby?"

"Yes, I have never known any one but you to take any interest in me—excepting, of course, the people who brought me up, and who were always kind to me, but you paid them well for it, for they told me so many a time."

"When I brought you here, I told you that it was absolutely necessary for you to remain in strict concealment for a while, and that although I could not explain the reason why such a course was necessary just then, I would do so in time."

"Yes, I recollect, and though I wondered greatly at such a strange proceeding, yet I supposed there must be some strong reason for it, or else you would not sanction it," the girl remarked.

"You are quite right, my dear, there is an excellent reason, as you may rest assured I would not have gone to the trouble of taking all these precautions."

"Well, I should surely think not."

"I never told you much in regard to your birth, Constance," the doctor observed. "Of course there wasn't much to tell."

"Your mother was a patient of mine, and died shortly after you were born."

"There were certain circumstances connected with the case which induced me to take charge of you, and I think you will admit that I have performed my duty to you just about as well as though I had been your own father."

"Oh, yes, sir, and I assure you that I am very grateful!" the girl declared. "The people who brought me up always had an idea that you were really my father, but there were some strong family reasons which induced you to conceal the fact."

"No, no! that supposition is entirely wrong!" the doctor declared.

"For my part I never believed it, for although you were always kind and considerate to me yet there you never displayed the affection which a father bestows upon a daughter," the girl explained.

"Quite right, my dear, and it is plain that your wits are much stronger than those of the people who took care of you!" the doctor declared.

"Still, that is not to be wondered at," he continued in a reflective way. "For although they were good-hearted, wise people enough, yet they

were merely common folks, and not over-blessed with an abundance of brains."

"I never thought so, I assure you," the girl responded.

"In the first place I was induced to take charge of you on account of the interest I felt in your mother, whose family doctor I had been for a number of years."

"Then, as you began to display intelligence I grew attached to you," the doctor continued.

"You must bear in mind that I was a man without family ties," he explained.

"I had never met any women whom I thought enough of to marry, and never expected to meet with one, and as I was well able to afford to take care of you, I determined to do so."

"I am sure I am very grateful, sir," the girl declared.

"Perhaps I can give you an opportunity of showing your gratitude," the doctor remarked in a mysterious way, which caused the girl to open her eyes in wonder.

"But to explain why I caused you to be secluded here," he continued.

"About a month ago it came to my knowledge that there was a certain party, long since supposed to be dead, who had made his appearance again, and was endeavoring to ascertain what had become of you."

The girl looked amazed.

"This man is a desperate fellow, one of the kind who would not hesitate to commit any crime if he could gain by so doing."

"Owing to a peculiar chain of circumstances, you stand between him and an end which he desires to gain, and I know this bold, bad man well enough to be certain that if he could find you out, he would not hesitate for a moment to compass your death."

"Why, this is terrible!" the girl exclaimed.

"It is really horrible to think he would want to injure me, who never did any one harm in all my life."

"This wretch is totally unscrupulous!" the doctor declared. "He cares nothing for a human life; in fact, it is reported that in foreign seas he has acted as a pirate, and that his hands are red with blood."

"How horrible!" Constance exclaimed, with a shudder.

"And this is why I secluded you here—to protect you from this vile man!"

"Oh, yes, I understand, and I am very grateful to you!"

"And now I have been thinking the matter over calmly, and I have come to the conclusion that the best way for me to protect you will be to give you the shelter of my name and of my home."

The girl looked at the old doctor in profound astonishment, for this was about the last thing that she expected to hear.

"Yes, Constance, I never thought I would marry—I never even dreamed that it would be possible for me to meet a lady who could make any impression on my heart," the doctor declared.

"Of course I always thought a great deal of you as a child, but since you have been under my personal charge here I have discovered that you possess so many charming qualities that I feel convinced you could make me an extremely happy man if you would consent to become my wife."

"It is true, I am somewhat older than yourself, but as I am still a hale, hearty and vigorous man that ought not to make any difference," he continued.

The girl hardly knew what to say.

The doctor had always been kind to her, and she felt extremely grateful to him, but the idea of repaying the service which he had done her by marrying him was extremely repugnant, and the more she thought about it the greater became her conviction that she could not possibly bring herself to do anything of the kind.

She felt that she was in an extremely awkward position.

It was utterly out of the question for her to marry this old man, for he was not only old enough to be her father, if not her grandfather, but it was her opinion that he was not quite right in his mind.

The doctor, with the talkativeness which comes with the advance of years, had told the girl all about his expectation of inventing a perpetual motion power which would revolutionize the machinery of the world and make him rich beyond the wildest dreams of avarice.

As Constance had received a good education, and was besides an unusually sensible girl, she knew enough to be aware that the old doctor was not likely to make a success out of his scheme, and he talked in such a wild manner in regard to it that it was no wonder she came to believe his brain was affected.

Placed in this unpleasant position, for a few moments she was undecided how to act, then her natural good sense came to her aid, and she determined to speak frankly, so she told the doctor just how she felt about the matter.

The old gentleman was very much disappointed, and endeavored to argue with her that

it was possible she might change her mind in time.

But Constance replied with such firmness that she would never alter her opinion that the old gentleman was impressed with the belief it was the truth.

He was very much annoyed, for in his ego-tism he had never counted upon the possibility that the girl would not be delighted to marry him, and so he took his departure decidedly disgruntled.

"Hang these women!" he muttered, as he closed the door of the apartment after him. "There is never any reliance to be placed upon them!"

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE PROFESSOR'S ADVICE.

HE found the professor anxiously awaiting the result of his interview with the girl, but the moment the wily Magilton caught sight of the old man's face he understood that he had not been successful.

The doctor sunk into the rocking-chair with a wearied air.

"How did you make out?" the professor asked.

"The girl is an idiot!" the doctor declared, angrily. "I thought she had some sense, but now I am satisfied that she hasn't any!"

"I surmise that the proposition you made to her was not accepted?"

"You are right! She declined to become my wife."

"Dear me!" exclaimed the professor, shaking his head in a melancholy way. "But, do you know, my dear doctor, I was really afraid that the girl might take it into her head to be willful."

"Women are so uncertain that there is no knowing how to take them!"

"Oh, yes, that is very true," the doctor agreed. "I never did have much opinion of the female sex, and now I think less of them than ever!"

"Well, it is very discouraging!" the professor declared.

"To think that after all the trouble which you have taken, this foolish girl, from a mere whim, should knock all your plans into a cocked hat."

"Yes, it is extremely unfortunate!" the doctor coincided with a doleful shake of the head.

"Well, what do you intend to do?"

"I hardly know."

"After all your trouble, and the expense to which you have been put on account of this girl, it was only right that you should make a good sum out of the affair," the professor urged.

"Oh, yes, I have spent a deal of money!" the doctor responded. "Just consider! I have taken care of this girl, and paid all her bills, ever since she was a baby; of course calculating to get my money back in time."

"Yes, I understand."

"Well, since I can't get the minx to marry me, I suppose I must go to work in another way," the doctor remarked, slowly, and in a reflective manner.

"How can you manage it?"

"I have all the proof necessary to back up her claim, and in my opinion there will not be a great deal of trouble in establishing it, and I suppose too I must allow her to know what is going on."

"I will take care, you comprehend, not to let her know just how much money is involved, but give her to understand that I do not know myself how much she is likely to get, then make a bargain with her to give me a certain amount, say twenty-five per cent of all I succeed in getting for her."

"Well, that is not out of the way," the professor observed with an approving nod. "Any lawyer would charge her that."

"Oh, yes, but if I could have induced her to marry me I anticipated that I would have the handling of all the money," the doctor observed in a regretful way.

"Very true and it is a pity," the other replied.

"But it cannot be helped, and I must make the best of it."

"I have an idea!" exclaimed the professor abruptly. "It is a little off-color, but under the circumstances I think you are justified in doing almost anything to prevent yourself from being robbed of this rich prize which you have toiled so hard to win."

The doctor looked askance at the speaker.

"This girl is here helpless in your power," the professor continued. "It will be an easy matter for you to infuse a little drug in her tea so as to make her stupid, then marry her; while she is in that condition she will not be conscious enough to object, and I think it will be possible to find some legally qualified party to perform the ceremony who will not pay any particular attention to the girl so long as he is well paid for his trouble."

The doctor cast his eyes on the ground and remained silent for a good five minutes, and from the expression on his face it was evident that he was going through a great struggle, being sorely tempted.

At last though he made up his mind; he raised his eyes again to the face of the other and shook his head.

"No, my dear professor, I really cannot do it," he said in a tone which plainly indicated that he had firmly made up his mind.

"I have never done anything of that sort in my life, and I cannot begin now," he continued. "I am aware that a great many men situated as I am would yield to the temptation, but I cannot do it, and so must content myself with making the best bargain that I can with the girl."

The professor understood the old doctor's nature well enough to comprehend that it would be useless to attempt to argue him out of his position, and so he did not try the task.

"I will get my materials all together and then have a talk with the girl," the doctor announced as he took his departure.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

A VILLAINOUS SCHEME.

PROMPTLY at the appointed time Joe Phenix arrived at the doctor's mansion to keep the agreement which he had made with the brace of rascals.

He was still in his disguise of the English cracksman, and we will therefore continue to speak of him as though he really was the man whom he represented in such a faithful manner.

Hitchcraft was waiting outside the gate for the arrival of the Englishman.

"I thought I had better meet you, for although it is dark the old doctor might happen to catch sight of you coming to the house, and, as he is an inquisitive old chap, perhaps he would take it into his head to see what you wanted," Hitchcraft explained.

"Ah, yes, and I haven't any time to waste in telling fairy stories just now," the cracksman observed.

"I will take you by a roundabout way through the garden to the back door, so the old man will not stand any chance of getting a glimpse of you."

"That is the way to work it!" the Englishman declared.

Then Hitchcraft conducted the other through the garden to the rear entrance to the mansion, which was in the left wing of the house.

They passed through this kitchen and up the back stairs to the professor's room, where they found that worthy waiting for them.

"You are on time," Magilton remarked.

"Oh, yes, you can always depend upon me to be right up to the mark," the cracksman replied.

"Take a chair and make yourself comfortable, and, Hitchcraft, turn the key in the lock so that we can't be surprised by the old doctor. It isn't likely that he will want to see me for anything, but still it is as well to be on the safe side."

"Oh, yes, always make everything safe; that is my rule," the Londoner observed, as he helped himself to a chair.

"Did you pick up any more information?" the professor asked.

"Yes, considerable. I have succeeded in getting on good terms with the valet, but I have not had time to pump him in a complete and systematic manner yet."

"Oh, it takes time!" Magilton exclaimed. "I understand all about that."

"The world wasn't made in a minute, you know, and a game of this kind can't be hurried, because if you try to force matters you run the risk of spoiling everything," the cracksman explained.

"I comprehend! And there isn't any hurry anyway," the professor observed. "It isn't like as if we were starving and needed the money right away."

"That is it, exactly!" the Londoner declared.

"It is one of those games which requires careful nursing, and a man must be sure not to make any mistakes or else all the fat will be in the fire."

"Yes, yes, that is true! Take your own time to work the trick," the professor remarked.

"I will, and you can bet good money that I will make a good job of it!"

"That is right, and, by the way, I think my pal here and I have hit on a job which we can let you into," the professor said.

"Glad to hear it!" the cracksman exclaimed.

"And if the thing goes through there is big money in it for all of us," Magilton continued.

"That is what we want," the Londoner remarked.

"It is a scheme the doctor got up and he has been working on it for years, but now, at the last moment, when the time for action has come he hasn't got the nerve to go in and take the trick the way it ought to be taken," the professor explained.

"Oh, well, it isn't to be expected that an old fellow of his kidney can take a big trick!" the cracksman declared.

"I will tell you the story, and then you will understand all about the thing," Magilton said.

"Go ahead! I'm all ears!" the Londoner cried.

"There is a young girl in this house—she is the doctor's ward, and her name is Constance Jacobs," the professor began.

Old and experienced gamester as the disguised detective was in this play where life and death were the stake, yet it was as much as he could do to refrain from allowing an expression of surprise to appear in his face when he was thus abruptly informed that the girl who had written the message on the shingle was an inmate of the doctor's house.

In striving to unravel one mystery he had unwittingly stumbled upon the solution of another.

"Constance Jacobs, eh?" he said. "That sounds like a Jewish name."

"The girl is not a Jew, and Jacobs is not her name," Magilton explained.

"The doctor called her that in order to hide her from the world."

"Yes, yes, I see," the cracksman remarked with a knowing nod.

"The doctor was the family physician of the girl's mother, and the mother died shortly after the girl was born."

"The father of the girl lived in New York and the doctor took a trip to the city for the purpose of informing him of the death of his wife, and getting instructions in regard to the care of the child."

"The doctor was aware that there was something strange in the relations which consisted between the husband and wife, for when she was taken sick, and the doctor suggested that the husband be warned, she objected."

"Of course, the woman had no idea that she was going to die, and death came so abruptly that she had no time to explain."

"Ah, yes, that is the way," the Englishman observed. "Things of this kind are put off and then they are never done."

"In New York the doctor made a strange discovery. The husband and father was away on a European trip, so he could not see him, but the doctor found out that he had practically deserted the woman whom the doctor knew as his wife, and had another wife and a child here in New York."

"Some men are up to tricks of that kind," the cracksman declared.

"The husband was a man of great wealth, and the doctor immediately got the idea that it would be possible for him to turn the affair to his advantage, the professor continued."

"Although the husband, being a free-thinker and despising churches, had never gone through any marriage ceremony with his first wife, yet the doctor knew that the marriage was a legal one, according to the laws of this State, for he had put up at the same hotel as the husband and wife in this city, and knew that he had publicly acknowledged the woman as his wife."

"Yes, I see, and after that he could not get out of it," the cracksman observed, much interested.

"Then the man had paid the doctor money in this city sending a check in a letter and referring to the doctor's professional attendance on his wife, and these letters the doctor had preserved."

"Aha! he had good proof!" the Londoner declared.

"Knowing that the first wife was the legal one, and her children the regular heirs to the father's wealth if he should happen to die without making a will, the idea came to the doctor to suppress the fact that a daughter had been born. The father was not expected back from Europe for a year, and when he did come he was not likely to trouble himself to inquire into the circumstances of his wife's death if the doctor made a report such as would satisfy him."

"Oh, it was a great game!" the cracksman asserted with a wise shake of the head.

"It went through all right!" the professor affirmed. "The doctor saw the father when he returned, told him how his wife had died, and presented his bill, which was promptly paid, and the father troubled his head no more about the matter."

"The doctor had the child taken care of, expecting some day to make a good stake through her, as he was a younger man by fifteen or sixteen years than the New Yorker, and so confidently expected to outlive him."

"This anticipation proved to be correct. The father died about a year ago, but the doctor, being a slow and pattering sort of man, hesitated to make a move, although the time had come; and there was another thing which caused him to be slow too."

"The first wife had another child, a boy some eighteen, older than the girl, who ran away to sea when a youngster, and no one knew whether he was alive or dead."

"He had made his appearance just before the father's death, hunted up the doctor and got from him the particulars of his mother's decease, and on that occasion had talked so wild and recklessly that the doctor, who was a naturally timid man, got the idea that the fellow was a scoundrel of the deepest dye, who would not hesitate at any crime."

"Ah, yes, these sailors are apt to be rough customers," the Londoner observed.

"So, when the doctor made up his mind to come to New York, and try to make some money out of the girl, he secured this old house, changed his name, so that he could not be followed, and shut the girl up in a retired part of the

mansion, only allowing her to take exercise in a little yard which was guarded by a high brick wall, so she could not get out or anybody get in. This was so the sailor could not get at her.

"This was formerly used as a private lunatic asylum, and this retreat of the girl was for the violent patients," the professor explained.

"But I never saw any brick wall when I was examining the crib with the idea of cracking it," the Englishman remarked.

"It is at the rear of the house, and a five foot space separates it at the end of the yard from the outer fence which is of wood."

"Yes, yes, I see," the cracksman observed.

It was a simple explanation of the mystery.

"The doctor calculated to marry the girl, and was all ready to go ahead now, for the sailor brother died yesterday, and by a strange chance the doctor came upon the scene just as the man died."

"Well, well, that was odd!" the other declared.

"As I said, it was the doctor's game to make the girl his wife, and so get control of the property," the professor continued.

"That is a good scheme," the cracksman asserted.

"But it cannot be worked, for the girl will not consent."

"Ah, that is just like these woman!" the Englishman exclaimed with a disgusted air. "I always hate to have them in a game, for there is no dependance to be placed upon them."

"I suggested to the doctor to drug her first and then get some fellow to perform the ceremony while she was in a stupor; afterwards she would have to make the best of it," the professor exclaimed.

"That was a splendid idea!" the cracksman declared, enthusiastically.

"But the old man hasn't got any backbone, and did not dare to risk it, and then the notion came to me that we three might be able to do the trick," Magilton remarked.

"I don't see any reason why we can't!" Hitchcraft observed, for the first time joining in the conversation.

"The scheme I propose to work is a bold one, but I don't see any reason why it cannot be done," the professor explained.

"It is my idea to seize the doctor, and shut him up in a cell down in the cellar, which the mad-house man fixed for a violent patient who would be apt to disturb the neighborhood with his cries."

"A man could yell at the top of his lungs there and no one could hear him."

"Then we must get some fellow to tie the knot, and I will drug the girl and marry her."

"We can explain the doctor's absence by saying he has gone away on business."

"It is a neat scheme!" the cracksman declared.

"I know just where to put my hands on the proofs which the doctor has collected in regard to the common-law marriage of the mother, and the birth of the girl, so we will not have any difficulty in proving the girl's claim to her father's property," Magilton remarked.

"It seems to me that the chances are big that we will win," the Londoner observed.

"I don't think there is a doubt about it," Hitchcraft declared.

"The estate is worth a couple of million dollars," the professor explained.

"A couple of million!" the cracksman exclaimed, as though profoundly amazed.

"Yes, and our game will be to make a compromise with the man who now holds it, this young Jacob Shubaugh."

"Oh, it is the Shubaugh property?" the Englishman asked.

"Exactly! and the odds are a hundred to one that when Shubaugh finds how strong a case we have, he will be willing to give us a good slice."

"Oh, yes, I don't doubt it. And, I say, I have just the man for the parson!" the cracksman declared. "He is a regular black tout, you know, but he got in trouble in England and had to cross the water. He is terribly hard up just now, and will be glad to make a few dollars."

The professor thought this was a lucky chance, and so it was arranged that the cracksman was to come with the minister at seven on the following night, and then, after arranging the details of the scheme, the Londoner took his departure.

All went well, and the plotters carried out their scheme without any trouble.

The doctor was seized, gagged and hustled down into the cell.

The girl's tea was drugged, and when the cracksman made his appearance with a very seedy-looking clerical man, all was in readiness.

Hitchcraft held up the girl while the minister read the marriage lines.

"Now, then, we are all right!" the professor exclaimed, in great glee, when the ceremony was completed.

Judge of the surprise of the villainous pair when the cracksman and the minister handcuffed them with surprising quickness.

"What does this mean?" the professor cried.

And then Joe Phenix removed his wig, and

with a decided alteration in his manner replied:

"You are in the hands of the law, professor, and I think I have got you dead to rights!"

"My name is Joe Phenix, the detective, and this is my lieutenant, Tony Western!"

A few more words and the tale is told.

The doctor was released from his confinement, and now very penitent, gladly agreed to prosecute the rascals.

Both were convicted and sent to Sing Sing.

Then Joe Phenix set to work to champion the cause of the orphan girl.

Suit was immediately brought against young Shubaugh, and after the first legal fight, when the brewer's lawyers saw how strong a case the girl had, they proposed a compromise.

Constance was content, nay anxious to share the wealth with her half-brother, and so the case was settled.

Again had the master bloodhound of the New World proved that he stood without a peer in his line, for he really took his life in his hand when he entered upon this desperate game.

THE END.

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